

January
1995

INTERREGNUM

#10



fantasy roleplaying and more

INTERREGNUM

#10

*An Amateur Press Association
covering fantasy roleplaying games
and anything that interests those who play them.*

Peter Maranci, ed.

Topic: "Burn Out"

January 1995

Interregnum is an Amateur Press Association, comprised of zines written by individual contributors and mailed to the editor. It is collated and published approximately twelve times per year. New contributors and subscribers are always welcome.

A subscription normally costs \$2.00 per issue plus the actual cost of the selected method of mailing (see FAQ for more details). Subscribers may open an account from which these costs are deducted by mailing a check or money order in US funds, payable to Peter Maranci, at the following address:

Peter Maranci
81 Washington St., #2
Malden, MA 02148

Phone #: (617) 397-7958 (please leave a message)

InterNet Email: maranci@max.tiac.net

Since Interregnum is an amateur production, it is necessary for contributors to help cover the costs of production: \$2 per single-sided master page mailed in. Alternatively, contributors may mail 200 good double-sided copies of their zine to the editor. The only additional cost to contributors is the price of the postage to mail their issue to them.

All zines sent in for publication in Interregnum should be copyrighted by the author. Copyright may be asserted by the use of the following phrase:

Copyright [Your Name] [Date]

or
© [Your Name] [Date]

Sample issues of Interregnum are available at \$3 each for US and foreign/overseas addresses.

Many trademarked products are discussed in Interregnum. No challenge to the holders of these trademarks is intended.

Opinions expressed in zines are not necessarily those of the editor, though they might be...

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PUBLICATION SCHEDULE:

⇒ The deadline for inclusion in Interregnum #11 is March 1st. Zines for Interregnum #12 must arrive by April 15th.

⇒ The topic for Interregnum #11 is *Love*.

—>Pete

January was the most eventful month yet for Interregnum—a great start to the new year. There's news aplenty, so let me get straight to it:

The Sampler Project

The Interregnum Sampler has been completed, and about 350 copies were distributed at the Arisia convention in Boston and RuneQuest Con 2 in California. The issues were quickly snapped up by con-goers.

A new flyer was also made up and distributed at the cons. Roughly 500 fliers were picked up at the two cons. A copy of the flyer is included at the end of this issue. If you'd like to copy it, please do!

More issues of the Sampler are being made up. If any reader would like copies of the Sampler or the flyer to distribute at a convention or game store, drop me a line. The weight of the Samplers makes it necessary to ship them via slow mail, so please give me a few weeks warning if at all possible.

The Ranks In Review

The latest issue of Shadis magazine features a review of Interregnum. Here it is in its entirety:

Interregnum

Publisher: Peter Maranci

Editor: Peter Maranci

Frequency: Monthly

It took the longest to overview Interregnum because it's an APA zine, meaning it's huge. Good thing I took my time, because some of it is excellent. IR was originally intended as a temporary project, but developed its own stable of members and now comes out monthly.

Even though most of the members communicate via the Internet, IR does not exhibit the confrontational attitude so common there. Instead, it has lucid, intellectual writing. Some of the articles are astute, insightful views into role-playing.

I chuckle reading some of their opinions on science fiction TV shows. I read some of their fiction, which I normally avoid in game zines. (What's more, I enjoyed it).

The down side of IR is the same with all APAs: they use lots of abbreviations (like "RAEBNC"), some authors write stream-of-consciousness, and there is almost no art. Most of these are minimal complaints, though, and to offset them, IR has superb layouts and smart articles. For a sample copy, write to: Peter Maranci, 81 Washington St. #2, Malden, MA 02148

Shadis #17 (January/February) p. 96

The cover of issue #5 is printed at the top of the column; the horned and clothed dinosaur. It reproduced extremely well, and is certainly the best-looking cover of the five zines pictured. I'll admit that's because the others were half-toned. ☺

A Letter At Last

Following is a letter that arrived a few days ago from a new subscriber—the first Letter to the Editor in IR.

I recently had my first encounter with Interregnum, having picked up a copy of #8 at The Wizard's Tower here in Nashua. What a great idea! While not all the zines included are to my liking, the package as a whole has considerable value. Gamers, especially roleplayers, are notoriously creative people. Your collection reflects this. It was a pleasure reading such a variety of styles, content, and opinions. And to think, this has been going on for so long! I feel left out.

No longer. Count me in. Enclosed you will find a check for \$XX. Please enter a subscription for me, starting with whatever issue is current. Also, please send me a copy of any and all back issues that you may have hanging around; it's rather maddening to enter into the midst of a conversation, and that's the way I feel in reading the references to earlier issues in #8. In order that I may catch up on the past, and to get a feel for who your contributors are, I wish to read everything that you have published under the IR banner.

You probably hear this all the time, but I am another potential contributor. I already publish, at irregular intervals, a newspaper for my AD&D group. Your readers would not be interested in that, as it is intimately tied to my campaign, but if I can find the time I think I should be able to produce work that fits your zine.

Thanks for your enormously interesting zine. I look forward to perusing the entire history of Interregnum, or at least as much of it as you can send me.

—Michael L., Nashua NH

Thank you, Michael—a positive letter is one of the better reasons I can think of to keep working on IR (not that I'm looking for reasons, mind you... ☺). Your issues should be in your hands when you read this.

As for writing for IR, I think our readers would be interested in seeing some of your campaign newspapers; after all, many of us have done the same sort of thing for our own campaigns. It's always helpful to see how different gamers approach similar tasks. Of course, original material for IR would be great. Perhaps you could include some of the newspaper material as filler in an original zine.

New Schedule

Consultations with contributors on the Net have persuaded me to switch to a new publishing schedule for Interregnum: once every six weeks, eight times per year. I'm indebted to **George Phillies** for his extremely sensible suggestion of publishing issues on the 1st and 15th of alternating months—that's a clear and obvious way to have a standardized schedule that everyone can remember easily. Following that schedule, IR #11 will come out on March 1st. Succeeding issues will come out on April 15th, June 1st, July 15th, September 1st, October 15th, and December 1st. 1996 will start with an issue on January 15th, completing the circle.

I hope that the new schedule will be easier on contributors, and that future issues will be even thicker. Of course I'll continue to send out announcements and deadline reminders over the Internet.

1994 was a good year for Interregnum. Here's hoping that 1995 is even better—for all of us.

—>Pete

The Interregnum FAQsheet

Interregnum is a monthly Amateur Press Association comprised of individual zines written and formatted by various authors and mailed to the editor for collation, reproduction, and binding. The primary focus is roleplaying games, fantasy, and science fiction, but diversity is valued—authors may write about anything they wish. **Interregnum** is written by mature gamers who necessarily have other subjects of interest beyond roleplaying games. It is hoped that the inclusion of such subjects will produce interesting insights into the roleplaying hobby.

Subscriptions: There is no fixed subscription period. Subscribers should mail a check or money order in US funds payable to Peter Maranci to establish an account; as issues are mailed the cost of the issue and the postage used to mail it will be deducted from the account. When the account gets low the amount left will be noted on the mailing envelope. At that point the subscriber may send more money to continue receiving issues, put their account on hold until some future time, or have the balance returned (at the editor's option, a final issue may be mailed instead to close out accounts in which the balance is less than the cost of one issue).

The usual cost per issue is \$2 plus postage. Due to special circumstances the cost has been lowered to \$1 per issue plus postage. Please note that when and/or if the special deal lapses we will return to the original rate.

Postage: Within the US 1st class mail for the average issue of **IR** costs \$1.67, while book rate (4th class) costs \$1.05. Subscribers may choose which method of mailing they prefer. Overseas subscribers may choose any type of mail available from the US Postal Service; rates under \$2 exist. Warning: all rates may go up soon!

Sample Issues: Sample issues may be obtained by mailing a check or money order for \$3 if the issue is to be mailed within the United States. A sample issue mailed outside the US is \$4 in US funds.

Writing for Interregnum: Anyone is welcome to write for **IR**. Since **Interregnum** is an amateur publication, not for profit, contributors help defray the cost of photocopying their zines. The cost is normally \$2 per single-sided page. However, the special circumstances noted above have made it possible to reduce the cost to \$1 per page. Contributors are not charged for a copy of the issue they write in—their only additional cost is postage.

Alternatively contributors may mail in 200+ copies of their zine, printed double-sided to reduce mailing costs. Zines mailed via UPS or any other private delivery service should be sent "no signature required".

Format: Zines must be clean and sharp enough to photocopy well. Desktop publishing is not required; zines may be typed, or even handwritten. Margins should be at least 1/2 inch wide on the top, bottom, and outer edges; a one-inch margin should be used for the binding edge (the left side for odd-numbered pages, right side for even-numbered pages). Internal art enhances readability and is always appreciated, as are multiple columns and subheads.

Content: Contributors are free to write as they wish, almost totally free of editorial oversight. I ask only that nothing be included which could lead to legal difficulties; please keep in mind that **Interregnum** is shipped across state lines and overseas, and is distributed in game stores which are open to all ages.

Copyright: All zines should be copyrighted by the author. Copyright may be asserted through the following phrase: Copyright (Your Name) (Date) or © (Your Name) (Date). (c) is not a valid designation.

Copyrighted and trademarked material is often discussed in **Interregnum**. Discussion of such material is not intended as a challenge to any copyright or trademark.

Emailing Zines: Zines in ASCII form may be emailed to the editor via the InterNet for DTP formatting, or sent in on 3.5" or 5.25" DOS-compatible floppy disks. Since time is limited (and becomes tighter as collation looms), ASCII zines sent in for layout should arrive at least four days before the deadline for printed zines. I'll attempt to capture the style of the contributor, if I have a sample of previous work and enough time. I can also accept files created with Publish-It for DOS or Windows on 3.5 or 5.25" disks.

Emailed zines will be printed on a 300 dpi Okidata OL400e laser printer for no extra charge.

Special ASCII codes may be included in emailed text to allow my DTP program to automatically format elements of the zine. A guide to these codes is available for email contributors—email for info.

Letters to the Editor will be gladly received, and printed in the editorial section. No letter will be published, however, that is marked "not for publication".

Back Issues: Back issues are available while supplies last. Issues #1-3 cost \$2 each in US funds, plus the cost of postage. Subsequent issues are available at \$1 + postage. A considerable savings in postage costs may be realized by shipping several issues at once.

Distribution: A limited number of promotional copies of Interregnum are distributed at selected game stores, conventions, and other sites. If you're interested in distributing free copies of IR, please contact the editor.

Please note that as the number of distributors increases (and it has been doing so, steadily) the number of promotional copies available for each site will necessarily decrease. Furthermore, production of promotional copies may be reduced or eliminated without warning. Only paying subscribers can be sure to receive all issues of IR. Paying subscribers receive their issues weeks or even months in advance of promotional distribution. Finally, only paying subscribers will receive special mailings of bonus material, should any occur. In other words, the Editor strongly urges readers of the promotional copies to subscribe. ☺

Net Connection: An InterNet alias has been set up which allows correspondents to receive information and updates about the status of Interregnum. Anyone who would like to be on that list should send email to maranci@max.tiac.net and include a valid InterNet address.

Glossary:

RPG: Role Playing Game

IR: Interregnum. You're soaking in it.

TWH: The Wild Hunt, an old and respected APA based in the Greater Boston area. A number of Interregnum contributors have written for TWH.

A&E: Alarums & Excursions, a slightly older APA based on the West Coast. editor Lee Gold 3965 Alla Rd. LA, CA 90066

RQ: RuneQuest™, a roleplaying system played by a number of contributors to Interregnum.

AD&D™: Advanced Dungeons & Dragons™, a roleplaying system

LARP or LRP: Live Action Role Playing (game); a generic term

PBEM: Play By Email

BTW: By The Way

GM, DM: Gamemaster, the person who runs the game

IMHO: In My Humble Opinion

RAEBNC: Read And Enjoyed But No Comment. An acronym commonly used by procrastinating contributors. 8^>}

CD-ROM: Compact Disk, Read Only Memory. Laser disks for computer which hold huge amounts of data. Many high-quality computer games are released on CD-ROM.

:) : a smile, indicating that the text preceding is not to be taken entirely seriously

8^>} : The cynical smile of a bearded, bespectacled editor

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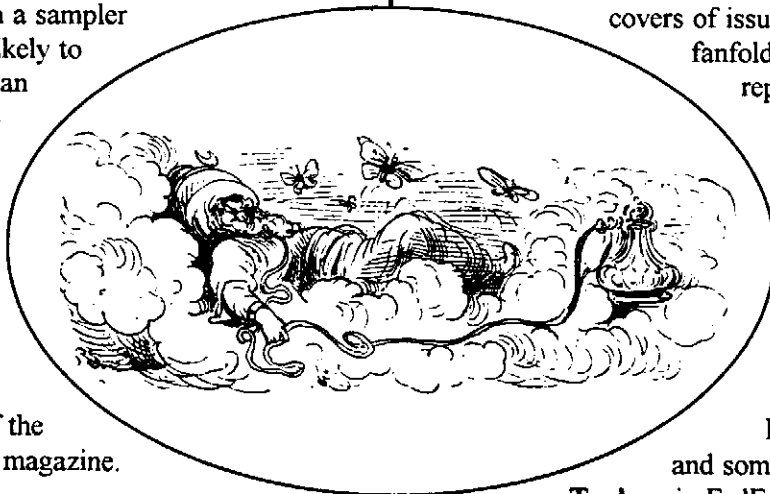
I've been busy.

The Interregnum Sampler

The **Interregnum** Sampler project was dragging. Other projects kept pushing it aside, while the two conventions I'd wanted the Sampler for were getting closer and closer. I knew what I wanted: a slim mini-issue containing interesting excerpts from a number of zines published in **IR** in 1994. It seemed to me that such a sampler would be much more likely to attract interest to **IR** than a mere flyer. Flyers are often picked up at conventions and game stores, but how many of us ever *do* anything with them? A complete issue, on the other hand, is a continuing reminder of the actual existence of the magazine.

Of course the Sampler would be expensive to produce, compared with a flyer. But it seemed likely that the increased appeal would be worth it. I couldn't help but remember that I got involved with zines because of **The Wild Hunt**—and the only reason I started writing for **TWH** was that I'd dug up an issue that someone had given me several years before.

Time was running short. I wasn't sure that I could get the Sampler together in time; both Arisia and RuneQuest Con 2 were coming up fast. It took fast and furious work one Saturday to get the master put together, and 350 copies made.



It was a difficult job. Sacrifices had to be made, and though I tried my best I couldn't include every **IR** contributor. My greatest regret was that I couldn't print **George Phillis'** "Who Slays Satan" in the Sampler, but limited space made it simply impossible. As it was, the Sampler came to 46 pages—16 more than I'd planned for.

On the other hand, I was extremely pleased with the back cover—a collage showing the miniaturized front covers of issues #2 - #9 in a double fanfold. Issue #1 was reproduced in reduced size on the front. The covers were copied on the light green stock used for issue #9. In my admittedly biased opinion the whole thing looked great.

I shipped 100 Samplers and some flyers to **Curtis Taylor** via FedEx for **RQCon2**—expensive, but there was no other way to get them to him in time. The other 250 copies were for **Arisia**.

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ARISIA '95

I didn't know what to expect from Arisia '95. Previous Arisia's had always been fun, but mixed; some problem(s) always turned up to marr the convention. Last year had been the best yet, the only real problem being the hotel's screwup on our room. To make up for that, the Gamemaster's Hall of Shame video won "Most Entertaining" in the Amateur Video contest, and the award ceremony was incredibly lavish.

In a way, that made me dread Arisia this year. There was no way it could match the '94 award ceremony; there's nothing like being lionized, and there was no way that I'd get the same treatment this year. I wasn't entering the video contest this year. I'd had an idea for a video, but it was a Star Wars parody—and the contest rules were so stringent that there was no way I could make it. How can you make a parody without using the music, costumes, or names of the original?

As it turned out, there was no video contest at all. There were other queries, but no one submitted anything.

We'd arranged to bring several entries from past contests to be shown during the amateur video timeslot. The GM's Hall of Shame is always a hit, and the recut Probability Ship is really pretty good. But showing isn't the same as competing. I'd get no plaque, no chance to walk out in my white tie and tails on Saturday night in front of a thousand people...

As fate would have it, there were other things to do. I found myself getting excited about promoting

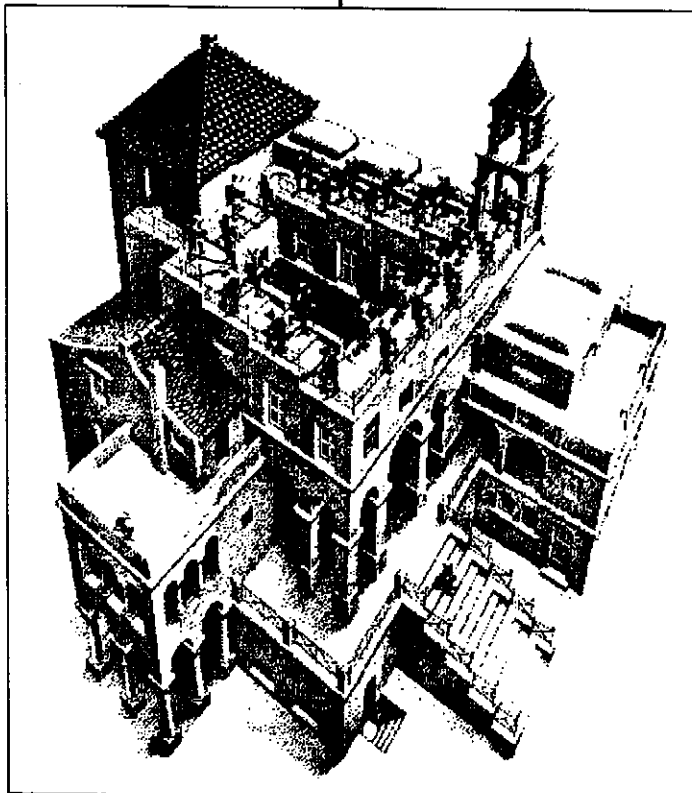
Interregnum at the Con; the hard work I'd put in on the Sampler was already paying off.

An odd chain of circumstances resulted in my sitting on five panels. I'd never done anything like that before, but without false modesty let me say that I knew I'd be great (or at least pretty good ☺). Years of GMing have made off-the-cuff public speaking a breeze for me, and I think I have some natural talent at that sort of thing. A few twinges of panic gave me pause now and again, but basically I wasn't worried. And the prospect of sitting in front of people for an hour at a time and talking was really appealing. Perhaps at last I'd get a "Program Participant" ribbon for my badge! In all the years that Lois and I had been doing amateur video we had never had a ribbon. They always forgot, or lost them, or something.

The Regency dance was also something to look forward to. It's ironic: when I was a kid, I'd gained the ability to force my temperature up several degrees rather than square dance in school. Yet last year I'd spent \$135 on an ultra-formal white tie outfit to dance in at Arisia. And now the dance would be one of the high points of the con.

I'd taken Friday off in order to get to the con early;

we had pre-booked a room this year, but since the Park Plaza has often screwed up room reservations I wanted to sign in as early as possible. However, I had a problem. The box of 250 Samplers were far too heavy to carry in on the subway (the "T"), and I didn't want to spend \$60 on parking for the con. The only thing to do was drive in with the luggage and Samplers, put them out and register for the con and hotel. Then I'd drive back



home and take the T back in. A waste of time, but a necessary one.

And that's what we did. Hotel registration went smoothly, for the first time ever. There was a momentary scare and delay at con registration, where it turned out my badge had been grossly misfiled, but it turned up after a few minutes. And I was early enough to find decent spaces to put out the Samplers and the fliers.

On the way home I made a quick stop at Keczer's, a store in Cambridge that sells new and used tuxedos. An extra bow tie, two pairs of white gloves, a silk handkerchief and a set of matching cufflinks and shirt studs came to remarkably little. I drove home, changed, and went in to the hotel.

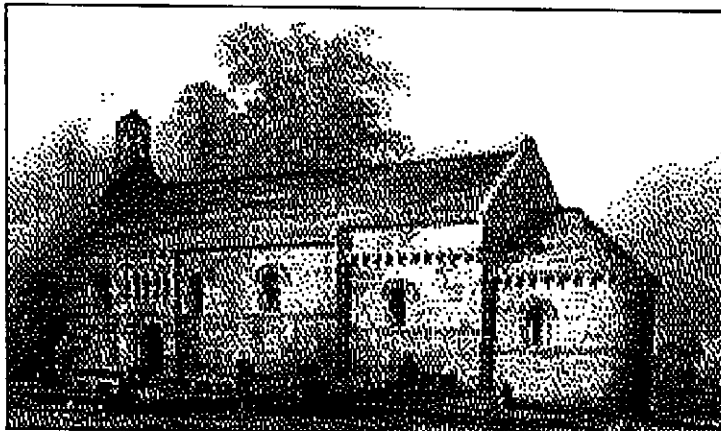
Many Samplers had already been picked up, and people were reading them in the halls. It was difficult not to ask them what they thought of it, but I managed to restrain myself—I might not have liked their replies. ☺

I'd had a hard choice for Friday night—or rather, a painful situation. Scott Ferrier was sitting on the “Advice to New Roleplayers” panel, and was showing “The Gamemaster's Hall of Shame” video to illustrate the sorts of GMs that new players should avoid. Of course I'd dearly have loved to sit in on that panel, and to see the reaction of the audience. But the Regency Dance was scheduled for the same time, and that came first.

The dance was wonderful. If you've never done a formal dance, take my advice and wear white gloves; they're an absolute necessity.

The last dance was incredibly strenuous. The “couples” were actually triples, one man and two women; the man had to dance with both women alternatively, while the off woman stood still. Since the dance involved energetic galloping, I was soon in a state of extreme overexertion. Mind you, I did dance fairly well; an acquaintance who watched me later asked where I'd learned. In fact, thanks to my youthful fear of an aggressive girl named Mary Lou in square dancing class I never *had* learned to

dance. On the other hand, perhaps his question was a veiled sneer. ☺



Where was I? Oh yes. When the last dance ended I tottered feebly to a chair. Suddenly I realized that my heart was pounding furiously, more rapidly than I'd ever felt it pound before—like a spasmodic rabbit. I felt as if I were glowing, giving off intense heat like a red-hot over element. It was a hot flash of sorts, something I'd experienced only once before. I couldn't help but wonder if I'd have a heart attack right then and there, or drop dead in a few hours. Would I wake up in the morning? Would I be missed, or forgotten in a few weeks?

As it turned out, I did die, and am now writing this account as a ghost. Ha ha! Actually I recovered fairly quickly, and am much reassured as to the state of my health—though I really should work out more (as in, at least once in a while ☺).

The rest of the evening was spent walking around and checking out the con. It's always fun to show off when you're in fancy dress, and I dare say Lois and I looked rather impressive in our Victorian outfits. Many folk stared at us, and several made compliments.

After a bit of effort I managed to pick up a “Program Participant” ribbon from the Con suite, which completed my outfit. Around midnight we tried to get dinner at “The Swans” in the lobby, but the kitchen was closed. We were forced to go to the snack stand in the lobby. This stand was a new thing for Arisia, and a remarkably good idea: it was run by the hotel, and served junk food until 2AM. The prices

were high, but not unreasonable. Having filled up on sterno-heated weird-looking hot dogs and very gloppy pizza, we headed for the room.

I took a long shower in the room (one thing I love about the Park Plaza is the huge dispensers of soap, shampoo, and conditioner in the bathrooms), and spent an hour or so making notes for the panels I'd be doing the next day. Panelists were almost always rather lackadaisical at past cons, but I wanted to make my first experience as a panelist a good one. Notes made, I hit the sack and slept like a log.

Saturday

8:30 AM

We got up early the next day. That wasn't typical for me, but I had the "Fanzine Publishing" panel at 10AM, and wanted to get a decent breakfast. On an impulse I picked out an odd outfit. I kept the tux pants, tailcoat and shoes from the previous night. But instead of the piquet shirt, vest, and bow tie I wore one of my most visually striking T shirts: a unique import from England that I picked up last year at **The Man From Atlantis** store in Harvard Square. It's a jet-black **Prisoner** shirt, with the face of Patrick McGoochan staring out grimly from a background of overlaid blue 6's. The picture is striped with blank strips, giving the appearance of prison bars. It's incredibly cool, and the whole outfit worked extremely well. More than a few people stopped me in the halls.

I should explain that I'm not at all fashionable in daily life (ask anyone who knows me). My wardrobe is dull and ill-fitting. Sartorial splendor is a once-a-year thing for me, so fun and unusual that I can't help but remark on it.

We decided to do breakfast in style: the buffet at the Cafe Rouge in the hotel. It was an incredible meal. The orange juice was delicious, and I had eight or nine glasses; I must

have sloshed as I walked out. But they definitely lost money on me. ☺

10:00 AM

The fanzine panel was small: at the beginning, **Lee Gold** of **A&E** and I were the only people on it. The audience was small to begin with. But people kept trickling in, and eventually **Chris Aylott** of the new **Babylon 5 APA** "**The Babylon Project**" joined us. It was a lively, interesting event, and when we finished I thought that another hour would have been a good idea. Next year, I'll suggest two fanzine panels: one a "how-to" and the other a general discussion group.

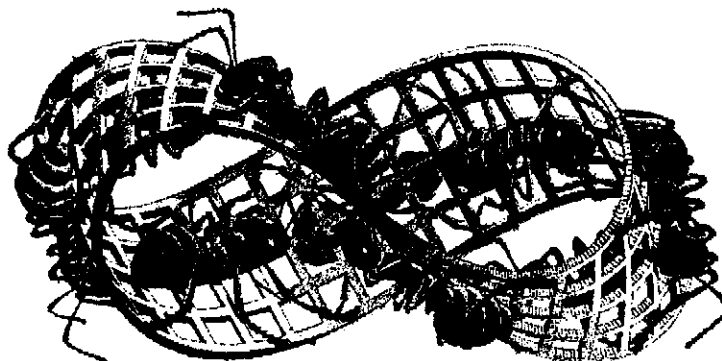
My memory of the panel is somewhat obscured (must have been the orange juice), but I can say that it went well and I was reassured that panels were both fun and easy to do. I do recall noting that the field had suffered a major loss when **Glenn Blacow** of **TWH** passed away last May. It was an odd thing, since I'd last seen Glenn at Arisia '94—his final con, as far as I know.

After the panel I got a chance to talk to Chris for a while, and picked up the first two issues of **The Babylon Project**. It's an extremely interesting APA, and I'll write a zine for it soon.

I walked around and looked at the con best as I could, and managed a quick peek at the Art Show. It was interesting, but as usual there was nothing that I really *had* to have. The dealers' room, on the other hand, was amazing. It was bigger and more crowded than ever. One video dealer had a huge selection; out of habit I asked the usual hopeless question. "Do you have *The Lathe of Heaven*?" I've been looking for that for many years, and had come to believe that it no longer existed. I was absolutely floored when he turned

out to have a copy! \$20 was out of my pocket and into his hands before he knew it. Yahoo!

Scheduling problems loomed. I had a panel from 1:00 to 3:00, Lois had belly-dancing at 1:30, and the



Amateur Video show would be at 2:00. I really wanted to see the reaction to The GM's Hall of Shame (I never get tired of getting laughs), but it would be hard to get away from the panel in time.

1:00 PM

The panel was "GM's Helpline". There were six or seven panelists, and all but one of them knew each other well. Nonetheless I think I more than held my own—for one thing, I was the only one with prepared notes. Also, the agenda for the panel was somewhat vague; were we there to answer questions, or talk about gamemastering problems? The result was a measure of chaos. But interesting chaos.

At one point a woman asked about a problem she was having with her Amber campaign: keeping the PCs together. They tended to split up, each to their own Shadow, and the basic plot and campaign would break up and be lost. A number of solutions were offered by the panelists. I outlined the "Genesis story" concept (from "Bar Wars" in *Interregnum* #1). Suddenly I came up with an off-the-cuff suggestion: why not have the PCs randomly exchange bodies at unknown intervals? That would force them to stay together, if only to make sure that their bodies weren't being abused! And the reason for the interchanges would make a good overarching long-term plot. She seemed to like the suggestion. The whole thing turned out to be so much fun that I couldn't break away early, though I'd planned to.

3:00 PM

When the panel ended, I rushed to the video room. I was just in time to catch most of a *second* showing of the Hall of Shame. The audience was sparse, but it got several laughs. I was glad to hear that the showings had gone out over a line feed to the hotel rooms, too. A writer for *Variety* magazine who'd judged the contest last year later stopped me and told me that the video held up well, and he'd enjoyed it very much.

4:00 PM

My 4:00 panel was "Tabletop vs. LARP". It was considerably more crowded, with seven or eight panelists. It was more chaotic, but interesting; several of the other panelists were members of NERO. However I managed to avoid hostility. I positioned myself as someone who'd played a lot of

LARPs, but was down on them, which was true. Articles I'd written for *The Wild Hunt* and *Interregnum* prepared me with a useful knowledge of the topic, and gave me something to say.

6:00 PM

I'd scheduled a meeting in an event room for



Interregnum contributors and readers. Lee Gold and others from *A&E* were there along with Chris Aylott of *TBP*, making it a general APA event. Among *IR* folk present were myself, Gil Pili, Mark Sabalauskus, Lois Folstein, Scott Ferrier, George Phillies, and Dan Johnson (did I forget anyone?). We chatted, consumed munchies, and scared away anyone who looked through the door. ☺

8:00 PM

After dinner at Swan's, we went over to the main event of the evening: the Masquerade costume contest. It was in the Grand Ballroom of the Plaza. There was quite a selection of costumes, four stand out in my memory:

- A re-enactment of a scene from *Labyrinth*
- A SteamTrek piece featuring a wind-up Mr. Data, put on by the Boston Star Trek Association, which won the main prize
- A reoccurring *Doom* show in which a zombie was repeatedly slaughtered by the player who then stole his weapon (at different levels he had more powerful weapons)
- And a truly bizarre show called "Charlie and the UFO"—some sort of advertisement for Boston in...um...some year soon. I'm not sure what they were promoting (a Worldcon bid, probably), but the sight of a giant UFO being carried around the audience while some extremely strangely-dressed characters cavorted

onstage has stuck in my mind...I only wonder what the hotel staff thought of it all.

10:00 PM

Lois and I had been invited to a Watergate party by Matthew Saroff, the founder of Arisia. A microphone taped to the ceiling lent verisimilitude to the event. I tried, but couldn't match the level of wit displayed—someone beat me to the G. Gordon Liddy jokes. ☺

12:00 Midnight

Arisia was packed with vampire people. A Vampire Dance was scheduled for midnight. I find some vampire folk rather affected in the Holden Caulfield sense, but Lois wanted to see the dance. She was dressed for it—once again she'd dressed as Death from the Sandman comics, and looked great. I looked rather great myself, in my tails and Prisoner outfit. We took a turn around the floor (the dance was packed) and I'm glad to say that we looked cooler than a lot of the people there. After a few minutes, we headed over to Dealer's Row.

The Arisia Dealers' Room is too small for all the dealers who come. Dealer's Row is where the extra go, along with those who want to be open later than the room. We gawked at all kinds of cool stuff, but didn't buy much. We looked in on the Con Suite, then headed back to our room to crash.

3:00 AM

I'd planned to get some sleep. But with all the inevitability of a Magic addict I turned on the TV. Wouldn't you know it—they were showing *Army of Darkness*. It's a great movie, and I sat like an idiot laughing until 5 AM. I barely managed to stay awake long enough to turn off the TV.

Sunday

10:00 AM

Another great breakfast buffet at the Cafe Rouge.

12:00 PM

"Roleplaying as an Educational Tool". Once again I was enormously helped by the fact that I'd written extensively on the topic in *TWH* and *IR*. An audience member told the story of his experience in high school Social Studies class, in which the class

had played the roles of U.S. Senators; he'd stood up to everyone else for his beliefs, only to back down at the last moment. I jumped in: "Perhaps you were better off backing down. I was in the same circumstance, and filibustered until they were forced to compromise with me. After class three of the biggest guys grabbed me outside of class, dumped me in the snow, and buried me. It was educational, all right. The lesson was: Buy good running shoes, and stay away from jocks."

1:00 PM

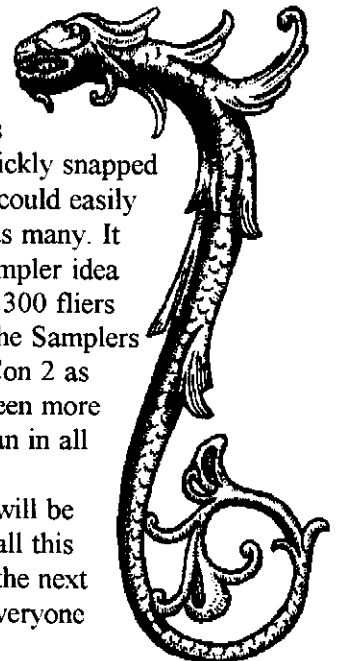
One last swing round the Dealer's Room before we left. I was glad to see that The Weapon Shops of Isher were there; I'd missed them last year. Giving in to my urge to spend money, I bought their last Annoyotron: a metal tube with three photocells that made weirdly differing noises depending on how much light hit them. A silly purchase at \$30, but I was in the mood.

And then, home. And sleep.

All in all it was a perfect convention: nothing at all turned up to blemish the experience. I'd been pained to give up the conflicting RuneQuest Con 2, but it couldn't possibly have been better than Arisia '95.

In fact, I have the bug. I really want to do more cons; promoting *Interregnum* and doing the panels was too much fun, and I can't wait a year to do it again. Boskone is the next logical target, and I'll write to them immediately.

Overall Arisia was extremely successful for *IR*. Over 200 copies of the Sampler were quickly snapped up by con-goers, and I could easily have distributed twice as many. It would seem that the Sampler idea was a good one. About 300 fliers were also taken. With the Samplers and fliers taken at RQCon 2 as well, *Interregnum* has seen more promotion this week than in all the previous months of existence combined. It will be interesting to see what all this seed work produces in the next few months. I'll keep everyone posted.



ES5: NEW OUTRAGES

Readers may remember that I've had quite a few problems with Factsheet 5, a large "reviewzine" which turned out to publish reviews without reading the sources. After considerable battle, I'd decided to let the issue go. "I won't let myself be drawn into this sort of thing again; while re-reading the autobiography of Isaac Asimov recently I was surprised to see that he'd had much the same experience. I'll profit by Asimov's experience." (TLTF #9 p. 7, IR #9)

Apparently the staff of Factsheet 5 don't want it to end that way. Many weeks after the topic was dropped on the Internet, I was amazed to receive the following postcard:

"INTERREGNUM #3, August, 1994 A pretty good APA about RPGs. Too bad it's spoiled by a publisher who is a whiney little asshole.

No trades/submissions wanted. Price: \$4. (0 pages/standard/DTPed/12 times a year/JP)"

That's the complete text of the new review. Note that this was written by Jerod Pore, the science fiction staff writer who'd told me that Seth Friedman (the chief editor of ES5) didn't always read what he reviewed. It pretty much speaks for itself, I think. I don't know if they'll print it. It doesn't make them look good, but they obviously aren't gifted with the best judgement...

POSTAL DAY OF JUDGEMENT

I'd had several nasty run-ins with a real bastard at the local Malden PO—an older white-haired man who said that since IR was photocopied, it wasn't "printed matter" and couldn't go by book rate. He seemed to make a point of hassling me; I found myself storming out of the building, cursing and with IRs unmailed, several times. Eventually I stopped going there, though it meant going miles out of my way and a delay of hours or days.

Not long ago I was in desperate fix. I had to mail a package right away, but was short on time. I decided to grit my teeth and use the local office.

When I got there, the white-haired guy wasn't around. After mailing my package in perfect comfort, I asked the other workers what had happened to him. "Why?" they asked. "Well...he hassled me several times." I admitted. At that they all burst out laughing. It turns out that I wasn't the only one he'd abused, and



some irritated customers had filed complaints. A month ago his superiors had moved him from the front desk to the back, away from the public. Apparently he wasn't very popular among his co-workers, as they all enjoyed telling me stories about how obnoxious that guy could be...

It seems that sometimes Right prevails, after all. Even at the Post Office. ☺

COMMENTS #9

Rich Staats:

Very funny, Rich. I kept getting the giggles while I was reading your Slorkoid scenario. I'd love to try It Came From The Late Late Show sometime, but no one around here has it...

Doug Jorenby:

It's interesting that you should mention Steven Brust's Jhereg as an example of a society in which resurrection is commonplace; that happens to be exactly what I was thinking of when I selected the topic, myself. Personally, I rather liked the series—at least until Brust started using it as forum to work through his personal problems.

That gives me an idea for a future topic, possibly: Roleplaying as Therapy. What do you think?

George Phillies:

It was good to see you again at Arisia, George. Thanks for the publishing schedule idea, and the recommendations on local cons.

The world-setting of "The Warrior Unseen" has a very interesting depth to it; have you considered running a game in that world? The story continues to be extremely interesting—I hope you'll tell us the ending, even if it isn't written. The language does become a bit disconcertingly modern at times.

Curtis Taylor:

Sorry to hear that the PO is giving you trouble again. They don't seem to like you, do they? ☹ Perhaps the new higher postal rates will encourage postal workers to be more efficient and responsive to customers' needs.

I look forward to seeing the next installment of SoloQuest.

Virgil Greene:

Regarding the Republican takeover of Congress, all I can say is that I no longer read the newspaper or watch TV news. The inherent bias in the media to the party of wealth and privilege is so widespread that no matter what the GOP does, the media will find some way to blame it on Clinton—and the public will swallow it whole. In the political world cause and effect have been de-linked, and it would seem that Bob Dole can have it both ways. A disturbing situation.

Your fictional presentation of the possibilities of resurrection was very well done. Nice job.

Regarding Arcna, the **Magic: The Gathering** book: *sigh*. What's next? **Magic** TV dinners? **Magic** breakfast cereal? **Magic** suppositories? This has got to stop! ☹

Scott Ferrier:

We've got to get you laser printing, Scott. Don't lag behind the IR crowd. Conform! ☺

Your review of local game stores was very interesting, though I have to wonder how useful it will be for our many far-flung readers and contributors. Ah well—if they ever visit Boston they'll have a shopping agency all ready!

Actually I still think that you could have added one or two more stores to the list. Some are only accessible by T and bus, but the bus isn't an insurmountable obstacle. After all, we rode the bus twice a day for years.

Collie Collier:

Time Warp! It's interesting that you reprinted your zine from The Wild Hunt in this issue, Collie, since the last issue of TWH was mailed so recently.

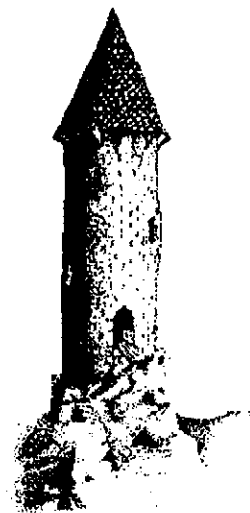
You asked if men are slaves to their hormones. After some thought, my answer is this: Most are, but I'm not! ☹

Your Tease character sounds like a lot of fun to play. Must have scared the other players to death! Actually that's a problem I had myself on some occasions. I'd be roleplaying my character in a group of wargamers. Group bafflement and eventual rejection were the result. But I've told that story before.

I'm not sure that GMing is what I like best about gaming, actually. It's just that it's *so* rare for me to find a GM who runs a game of the peculiar type that I can really enjoy...it's been years now. Running my own games is the closest I can get to my personal gaming ideal.

Tara & Jenny Glover:

Welcome to Interregnum, Jenny and Tara! I'm glad to have you aboard as our first overseas contributors. And Tara, you've broken the age record for IR contributors!



Gender: Gaming in the US is fairly male-dominated as well, but the statistical universe is larger (and perhaps more fragmented). Yes, there are many groups of adnoidal teens here; however, we don't game with them. In fact, we never *meet* them! Perhaps that's because so many of the gamers I know are no longer in college. There's no centralized gaming group or organization, and so gamers tend to naturally congregate with those of similar inclinations. Though mature roleplayers are undoubtedly in the minority, they're all I see.

It would seem that mature roleplaying attracts a more gender-balanced group of roleplayers. But perhaps I'm being smug.

There's a quarterly APA which is just about gaming by and for women; men sometimes contribute to it, but the focus is definitely female. Pallas' Podium is the name, and I believe they come out quarterly. I can probably dig up the address, if you'd like.

How would I react to an 11 year old girl joining my campaign? If she was an intelligent and imaginative roleplayer, as anyone else—I'd welcome them gladly. Can you be in Malden by next Wednesday, Tara? ☺

Gil Pili:

The Harn campaign sounds very interesting—which is strange, since my memories of that setting were that it was dry, overcomplicated, and dull. Of course, my exposure to Harn many years ago was brief. Perhaps it's all in the presentation.

I liked your review of Interview with the Vampire (and has anyone else wondered with it's Interview with the Vampire and not A Vampire, as in the book?). I haven't seen it, and probably won't. In fact, the only movie I've seen in months was *Vanya on 42nd Street* with Wallace Shawn—a very interesting movie. But since he wasn't playing the Sicilian or the Grand Nagus I won't review it here.

☺

FILLED WITH SHAME

Following this page is the slightly re-written and DTPed version of "The Gamemaster's Hall of Shame", which first appeared in "Rack & Rune" #2 in The Wild Hunt. I'm working on a sequel of sorts, and a Player's Hall of Shame too.

NEXTISH

You wouldn't believe what I had to leave out of this issue. More on the Wonder campaign, Star Trek: Voyager, the story of my strange and profitable experience with a "survey" on a new product, reviews of The Lathe of Heaven, Space Ace on CD-ROM, the new complete collection of the works of Cordwainer Smith, and lots more. Will they ever see print?

Um...probably. ☺ Take care, everyone! See you on March 1st!

—>Pete



COLOPHON

The Log That Flies #10 was gestated in a P. Maranci 30.8 brain. Much of the text was then written with PC-Write 2.5, an ancient but serviceable villain word processor.

The text was formatted for desktop publication using Publish-It 4.0 for Windows, a cranky but cheap DTP program.

The DTPed document was printed on an Okidata OL400e 300 dpi laser printer—at last!

Most of the art in TLTF is taken from books of copyright-free clipart published by the Dover Publishing Co. of Mineola, NY. Reviews of various Dover books may be printed in future issues.

The art was copied on a Kodak 2110 high-speed duplicator.

Am I the first person to conceptualize a card game called Mundanity: The Scattering? ☺

—>Pete

Every roleplayer has heard stories of the classic "Monty Haul"-style gamemaster, who gives out treasure hand over fist until the players are practically drowning in loot. Such games soon become boring. But there are other kinds of bad gamemasters too, often forgotten by the gaming public. Roleplayers should learn to recognize the warning signs of these scourges of the gaming world. As a public service we are therefore proud to present:

THE GAMEMASTER'S HALL OF SHAME

10) Minnie Haul (Also known as *That Cheap Bastard*)

Quote: "Okay. After twenty-seven sessions you have finally slain the Three Giant Dragons of Chaos. In the treasure vault you find... 12 copper pieces and a rusty fork. Who gets the fork?"

Good Points: You'll never be over-encumbered.

Bad Points: Majority of characters killed by starvation, plus risk of lockjaw from rusty fork.

9) Mr. Softee (Also known as *Pathetic Guy* and *The Amazing Mushman*)

Quote: "You're taken 3 points of damage? Uh... suddenly the troll falls over and spontaneously combusts! Magically, the smoke heals you."

Good Points: Characters never die. Ever. No matter what.

Bad Points: Who cares?

8) Anger Man (Also known as *Mr. Psycho* and *It Wasn't Me, Master*)

Quote: "What?!? You won't obey my NPC? Suddenly all your limbs fall off. And your head explodes. Happy now?"

Good Points: Order and discipline.

Bad Points: Discipline und Order.

7) Das KillMeister (Also known as *Dr. Death* and *Why Do I Keep Playing?*)

Quote: "Better roll up six characters each. That should last the first session. Maybe." [evil chortle]

Good Points: The thrill of danger.

Bad Points: The boredom of constant defeat.

6) The Sexist Pig (Also known as *The Sleazeball* and *L'il Friskies*)

Quote: "They rape you and you love it, like all women. Ha ha ha! Now you're pregnant!"

Good Points: Not boring.

Bad Points: Extremely irritating. Will emotionally scar any player under the age of sixteen. Knows no shame. Will probably enter politics.

5) Das PunMeister (Also known as *Stop and Please, I Beg of You, Kill Him*)

Quote: "A killer Ent is lumbering toward you! Woodn't you know. I'd leaf him alone. Bet his bark is worse than his bite!"

Good Points: A wacky, funny, laugh-a-minute guy.

Bad Points: Will not stop.

4) Monotone Man (Also known as *ZZZZZZZZZZ...*)

Quote: "Hi. I'm the King." "Hi. I'm the peasant." "Hi. I'm the wizard." "Hi. I'm the knight." "Hi. I'm the Dragon."

Good Points: Will never cancel due to laryngitis.

Bad Points: Save vs. Paralyzation or Die.

3) The Drunk (Also known as *What's That Smell?* and *Not Again!*)

Quote: "H'lo. BLEUUEUERGHH!!! G'bye..."

Good Points: Vivid descriptions of strange, bizarre creatures.

Bad Points: Rarely coherent. Will probably die soon.

2) The Insane Plotter (Also known as *Machiavelli* and *Mr. Mxyxplyxx*)

Quote: "But the twelfth arbitrary conundrum signifies nascent ursinoids rising. Any idiot can see that!"

Good Points: Dazzling, intricate plots, sub-plots, and sub-sub-plots.

Bad Points: Makes you feel really stupid.

1) The Grrreat Actor (Also known as *Get A Life*)

Quote: "Alas, poor Yorrick, I knew him well. 'Twas but the bare bodkin of our discontent which ravelled his sleeve of care. And now all is lost, forever lost!"

player: "Does that mean I can order a drink now, Mr. Innkeeper?"

Good Points: Vivid, dramatic, well-characterized NPCs.

Bad Points: Vivid, dramatic well-characterized NPCs won't shut up. Really embarrassing to be seen with in public. Will probably end up in an institution or on daytime TV.

QUIZ

Question #1: Which of the above have YOU been?

Question #2: Which of the above have I been?

Question #3: So what?

Send quiz answers to your parents. All entries will receive a "Why do you play those silly games?" lecture, free of charge.

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A video version of The Gamemaster's Hall of Shame is rumored to exist...

Session Notes #24 Douglas E. Gorenby

All Along The Watchtower

"....there are many here among us
Who feel that life is but a joke.
But you and I, we've been through that,
And this is not our fate.
So let us not talk falsely now,
The hour is getting late..."

-- Bob Dylan

I'm writing this zine over New Year's weekend, and given the media mania for year-end wrap-up pieces, I thought I'd review some of the more interesting tidbits to drift across my desk in the last month or so. **Surgeon General's Warning: This product does not contain any Top Ten Lists, which have been shown to cause brain death in laboratory animals exposed to large doses.**

Neuromancer by William Gibson. Yes, I realize there's nothing new about this. In fact, Gibson's groundbreaking cyberpunk novel was released over ten years ago. To celebrate the anniversary (or perhaps because he has been going longer and longer periods of time between works... ☺), Gibson has released an audio version of the novel. I picked it up on CD: 5 CDs (6 hours) of Gibson reading the novel along with music by Argabright, Barg, Black Rain, and U2.

It's not a dramatization, *per se*, as Gibson is the only voice performer, and he should not give up his day job to become an actor. Still, there's something almost hypnotic about Gibson's South Carolina drawl as he carries Case and Molly through the squalor of Chiba City or The Sprawl. The description of the initial cyberspace run on Sense/Net to obtain Dixie Flatline's construct is electrifying -- so much so that I was paying almost no attention to the road when I listened to it in the car. Fortunately, traffic isn't as bad in the Dark Present. ☺

My chief complaint is that the discs aren't subdivided into tracks. That is, each disc is one 72 minute track. If you can't listen all the way through a disc at one sitting, you're doomed to repeat history. Still, that's a minor quibble with an otherwise fine production.

Monty Python And The Holy Grail, directed by Terry Gilliam and Terry Jones. Criterion just released this cult classic in a newly-remastered laser disc format. If you've got the tech for it, it's well worth the investment. As with all Criterion products, it's a class act -- letterboxed in the original aspect ratio, and with lots of LD extras. The soundtrack





A knight who *doesn't* say,
"Ni!"

The Fog Of War: Not knowing what all of the 409 cards in the *INWO* set are, it's difficult to anticipate a strategy. A review of the cards I have suggests there are very few cards with more than one control arrow. Is this a deliberate design choice by SJG to make large power structures less likely? I do I just have crummy cards? The cynical among us will be able to answer this query with ease.

runs on the digital audio track, but by selecting one of the analog tracks you can either hear the film dubbed into Japanese (OK...) or listen to directors Gilliam and Jones discuss the making of the film, shot-by-shot. The original theatrical trailer is included, and 24 seconds were reinserted into the "Castle Anthrax" sequence (nudge, nudge...wink, wink).

Probably the most hysterical "extra" on the LD is a totally new bit. Gilliam and Jones had a translator take the Japanese-dubbed version and create English subtitles for it. In the scene where Arthur and the knights first approach the castle of the French, Arthur says (in the subtitles) that if the master of the castle will give them food and a place to sleep, he may join them in their "search for the sacred wine glass." It really devolves, though, when John Cleese (as the arrogant French man-at-arms) begins to taunt the English knights. In the original, he threatens to "wave (his) private parts at your aunties." This is back-translated from the Japanese as, "I can tell what kind of people your parents were just by looking at you." OK..... No wonder we can't negotiate a decent trade agreement. ☺

Illuminati: New World Order by Steve Jackson. Yet another example of everything old being new again -- not only new, but collectible! Steve Jackson has revamped his time-honored game of global conspiracy and secret societies into yet another entry in the collectible card market. I can't say as how I'm overjoyed by this development, but given that the structure of the original game was card-based, it *does* have some design integrity. Jackson eliminated money from the original, which makes things a bit more efficient in play. The "New World Order" cards are an interesting variation that allow players to alter almost all of the groups in play (for instance, a "Peace In Our Time" card increases the strength of all Peaceful groups by 1 and lowers the strength of all Violent or Criminal groups by the same amount).

The wicked sense of humor of the original game is still present, and much of the political and social satire has been updated for the 1990s. You can have the Tabloids expose the Templars, or use the Science Fiction Fans to take control of the Church of Elvis. Now if I could just find a way to make this Newt Gingrich card *Extremely Rare*.... ☺

Pacific Rim Sourcebook by Chris Pasquarette, Paul Duncanson, and R. Talsorian Games. *PacRim* is the latest sourcebook for *Cyberpunk 2020*, and probably the best of the regional sourcebooks produced to date. It has the basics you would expect from a book covering this area of the world: projected histories and social structures for Japan, China, Korea,



While Animal Form Kung-Fu is well represented by the Crane Form, I consider the lack of the more esoteric Cat Form to be a serious omission. Then again, such brutal attack forms as the "Furball Heave" or the "Multiple Shed" would probably be so powerful as to unbalance the system.

The Pesky Pentium:

Given the revelations of the past two months, I'm glad I've been playing games on my Pentium, and not conducting breakthrough biomedical research. Think of the embarrassment potential! "Umm...that cure for cancer? Forget it..."

and Australia in 2020. *PacRim* goes beyond the basics, though, and provides information on Myanmar (the artist formerly known as ♂♀ -- I mean, Burma), Brunei, New Zealand, Laos, and other interesting places off the beaten track. As with all the superior *CP2020* products, there are great slang sections. These aren't in some movie-like "Pan-Asian Japanese," either. There are different sets of slang for different ethnic and linguistic areas. The authors also update the LifePath system to account for the social and cultural differences in the Far East.

Even if you have no interest in adventuring along the *PacRim*, or including NPCs from that area (which means you're missing out on some really rich cyberpunk opportunities), *PacRim* is worth the price for the overhaul of the *CP2020* martial arts system. I love the differentiation of forms in *CP2020*. Not only is there a great role playing hook in having your character study a specific form of martial art, there's also a meaningful link to the combat system in that some forms have specific bonuses for types of attack or defense. At the same time, *CP2020* martial artists could be grossly overpowered, such that they would be more likely to drop an opponent than a rapidfire autocannon. *PacRim* pulls all of this together, preserving form differentiations while making form bonuses much more restrictive. There's also a fantastic listing of martial arts weapons to accompany the revision. This one gets two big cyberthumbs up.....right against your accupressure points.



I don't want to poach on **Scott Ferrier's** turf, but there are a few items for the small screen (i.e., monitor) that I wanted to note. All materials were reviewed on a Pentium 90 MHz system with 16 MB RAM, a 2x CD-ROM drive, an Ensoniq Wavetable Sound Card with a satellite/subwoofer system, and a 17" SVGA monitor.

Master Of Magic by SimTex. I had recommended this game with reservations in a previous zine. Now that the v1.2 patch is out, those reservations are essentially gone. There may be bugs I haven't come across yet, but v1.2 seems to be a very stable platform.

The game itself owes a great deal to Sid Meier's *Civilization*, both in terms of the flow of play and the compulsive attraction of the game. For me, the most wicked games (in terms of wasting time) are the ones that keep stringing you along. "Just one more turn, and I'll have that new spell researched/get that new paladin unit/summon that sky drake/capture that last city..." The excuses are endless. © You play a

wizard in competition with 1 to 4 computer-controlled wizards to control two worlds, Arcanus and Myrror. You build cities (including special buildings such as Alchemists' Guilds, Granaries, Armories), units (from swordsmen to fantastic types such as griffins and stag beetles), research a series of spells (from realms of knowledge like Life, Death, Nature, Chaos, and Sorcery), and accumulate both gold and mana. There are places of mystery to explore, nodes of magic energy to control, and heroes to recruit. You can even create powerful magic weapons and artifacts for your heroes.

Strategic Variance: F. Bob Mosdal makes the argument that you can create a viable *MoM* wizard with only a couple of spell books and the rest of your points sunk in to special abilities. While I've confirmed this strategy works, you have to go all-out for an early win before the spell research of your opponents pays off. This is particularly true on the higher difficulty levels.

One of the best things about *MoM* (other than the cute acronym ☺) is the very high replay value. The permutations are almost endless. The worlds are generated randomly each game, and you are likely to face a different array of enemy wizards. By customizing your wizard, you can experiment with different types of magic and different special abilities (warlord, channeler, sage master, etc.). You can also choose to start with different races (orcs, high elves, lizardmen, dwarves, etc.), although your ability to capture other cities makes the latter less crucial than your choice of magic.

The computer is also a fairly decent opponent, as these things go. Diplomacy with the enemy wizards can play a key role in the game, and the enemy wizards will ally or go to war with each other, independent of what you're doing. Overall, I'd have to say this is one of the best strategic computer games I've come across in a long time. Don't buy it if you have a lot of work to do in the near future. ☺

Monty Python's Complete Waste of Time by 7th Level. This product wins my award for the most aptly-named CD-ROM title ever released. Oh, can you waste time! Allegedly, there is a game hidden within the overt areas of the program (things like "Spot The Loony" or the TV Room, complete with a penguin on top of the telly) -- but who really cares? It's a great excuse to see classic video clips from *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, listen to some side-splitting audio bits, and revel in Terry Gilliam's surreal animation. The CD-ROM version also contains the "Desktop Pythonizer," which allows you to install demented interactive wallpaper on your system, or to make your keyboard emit random rude noises. It even has a collection of telephone answering machine messages newly recorded by members of the Python troupe.

CD-ROM seems to be a perfect medium for Terry Gilliam's style of animation, allowing him to mix incongruous images and backgrounds with ease.

As noted media critic F. Bob Mosdal is fond of saying, "It's great...if you like that sort of thing." If not.....look, it's people like you what cause unrest.



A Great .SIG file I spotted on the Net: "On-line services will be Microsoft's Vietnam."



Internet:

dej@ctrl.medicine.wisc.edu

Cinemanía '95 by Microsoft. It pains me to admit I spent money on this, as Citizen Gates and his merry band of monopolists rank just above T\$R, Inc.TM on my corporate love list, but life is full of guilty pleasures. *Cinemanía* is a good example of putting the potential of CD-ROM to work for the information-starved. Nearly 20,000 different theatrical and TV movies are indexed and cross-referenced on this disc. If you just wanted movie reviews, you could buy hardcopy at a fraction of the cost. However, on CD-ROM, you have the ability to set filters to search the database in unique ways. Want to find the complete filmography of Helen Hunt? It's there. Want to select one of the top 25 date movies of all time? There's a random selection function that will do it for you. There are general background pieces on aspects of film (genres such as musicals, *film noir*, oaters, etc.), and biographies of many performers, directors, writers, and producers. There are also the obligatory multimedia bells and whistles: still photos, music, dialog clips, and a precious few bits of digitized film sequences.

I have two major quibbles with this product. First, it could really use a "back" function that allows you to return to the previous screen, such as those found on the NetScape or Mosaic WWW browsers. I find I have to do some hypertext gymnastics to get back to the main thread if I follow a tangent very far. Second, there are reviews of various films by Leonard Maltin, Roger Ebert, and Pauline Kael. Ebert's are by far the best (and also the longest), while Kael's are quite acceptable. Unfortunately, quite a few of the movies only have very terse reviews by Maltin, who tends to have ruthlessly pedestrian taste. User, beware!

Comments On Interregnum #9

Maranci: Great cover, Pete! I think it's one of your classiest efforts to date for *IR*. I also enjoyed the *Wonder* player's guide. Dream magic is an inspired idea for the game. I hope that you find players who are worthy of its potential. To me, there would be two obvious pitfalls. One would be munchkinism ("OK, I'm dreaming up the most powerful magic item in the universe"), but you're an adept enough ref that you probably won't have problems with that. The other is capturing the surreal nature of dreams in a verbal format. One is forced into a certain degree of secondary elaboration that changes the nature of a dream. Still, I wish you great success. I hope we hear more about the campaign as it progresses.

Phillies: Interesting observations on the culture shock between East and West (coasts, that is). Do you think the relative difference in combat

frequency is a function of group preference, or more of a generalized regional difference? I got the impression that **Collie Collier** plays with a number of different groups, while the Manchester campaign has been self-contained for a long time. I don't know anyone in the Great Frozen Wasteland (i.e., WI) that is big on the Hero System, so it's hard for me to compare.

Taylor: A zine of almost Zen-like simplicity. I hope the U.S. Snail treats you better once they're getting more money out of all of us. ☺

Life After Death: I suppose that is simply one facet of the larger question of how PCs are handled after they "retire" from adventuring, or how groups of players deal with PCs who die during an adventure.

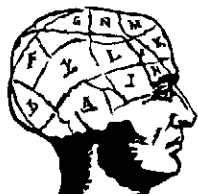
Greene: Congratulations on a creative consideration of the whole resurrection issue. As far as the undead option you mentioned, I have a dim memory of a *C&S* game I played in briefly many years ago. A necromancer PC animated two slain PCs (low level beginning characters) as zombies....and the stink that arose wasn't just from the rotting bodies! The player whose characters had been "zombified" was furious at the necromancer and came very close to leaving the game on the spot. Ω And speaking of Things Man Was Not Meant To Know, the thought of *M:tG* cards featuring *IR* personalities ought to be good for the loss of several SAN points. ☺

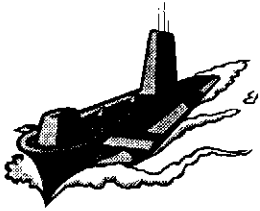
Ferrier: An entertaining review of Boston-area gaming stores. Now I'm in the odd position that if I ever go to Boston, I'll know where the game stores are, and not have a clue where to eat. Hmmm.... ☺

Collier: "Tonight on *It's The Mind*, we consider the phenomenon of *deja vu*...." AΩ I don't object to reprints, Collie. In fact, I enjoyed reading your thoughts on passion in characters in *TWH* the first time around. It seemed a bit incongruous to reprint the comments on old issues of *TWH*, however, since it's quite likely that many *IR* readers don't have access to them. Just my US\$0.02.

Glover & Glover, Ltd.: Welcome to *IR*, and congratulations on being our first non-North American contributors (although the status of the California contingent may be questionable ☺)! Best of luck with the forthcoming convention in Glasgow. Is it being held in the SECC, or someplace a bit more intimate? I was there for a conference last spring, and fell in love with the land and the people (not to mention those pints of Special Tartan!). If I'd eaten the food much longer, though, I would have made my cardiologist a busy and wealthy man.

I also had one of those surreal experiences that make you wonder how much the cyberpunk authors are cribbing from reality. A friend and I



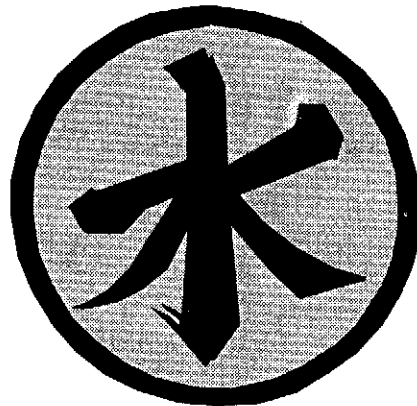


"Unconfirmed reports persist of a monster in Loch Long, Scotland..."

drove north from Dumbarton on the A814 along Loch Long, intending to loop back south along the shore of Loch Lomond. The A814 was a splendid, twisting 2 lane road with the loch on the left and concealing woods on the right, occasionally revealing a tumbled, moss-covered fragment of wall. Suddenly, the view of the water was obscured by a set of double fences topped with razor wire. There were floodlights everywhere, and signs warning of attack dogs on patrol. A little bit of high-security horror marring the countryside, courtesy of the M.O.D. ☹

Tara, you have great taste in *anime*. Miyazaki-sama is a genius of animated work. Good luck with your programming plans!

Pili: Re: your comment to **Dale Meier**, I couldn't agree more about inexperienced role players being some of the best people to recruit. They don't come to the game with lots of expectations about what "can" and "can't" be done in a role playing game. It's one of the things I enjoy most about teaching introductory level classes; the students ask innocent questions that can make you rethink fundamental assumptions.



REFUGEE # 197

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The contents of this zine are fiction. I would include *Communications*, Letters to the Editor, in which I publish letters or comments from correspondents, if by some chance I ever received one from the readership.

Commentationes

The Log That Flies: It would appear that one may now write *Le Roi est Mort! Viva le Roi!* A nice description of Wonder. Did you perhaps mean picaresque rather than picayune? The UGSS Beryl mission was really strange. The change from 'proceed with extreme caution' to 'with all haste' somehow sounds like Dominion: Tank Police.

Session Notes: Season's Greetings to you part of the Universe! How is the rest of the former pack? I never hear from Dana or Dana any more. With respect to the birth trauma and Rank, are we then to infer that those born by Caerarian section, who missed the traumatic part of birth, are therefore going to be mentally very different than those who were born by the more traditional means? wrto yr cts, Power Rangers was not that bad. You'd think it was something something something *from Beverly Hills* whose martial arts choreographers view having the female characters doing cartwheels in front of the villain to be an efficacious martial arts attack. Obscure jet aircraft? Did they get the B-60 (true-jet version of the B-36; low-tech backup to the B- 52, just as the B-32 Dominator was the low-tech backup for the B-29), or perhaps the B-43 (number may be wrong on the latter; this was the first six engine jet aircraft.) (Of course, if you really want to crock a bomber nut, you give him a chance to fly into combat on a B-2, neglecting to feed him the full specs for that noble combat aircraft, the Curtis Condor.)

Who Is John Galt?: Ooh, more cards! It's like Stupendous Lairs and Liches, except you have to pay real money to use them.

The Eight Track Mind: The Four Horsemen of the Gingrich (sorry, I'm not a liberal) are the less ominous symptom from the liberal perspective. The more ominous perspective should be that Gingrich arrived not only with a

strategic direction like Reagan and Clinton, but also detailed tactical battleplans, hardened by years of recruitment of Congressional supporters. He can still shoot himself in the foot. I believe his largest hazard will be not trying to repeal the 1994 Crime Control Bill. Norlax and Eldnor stopping in their mad passionate embrace 'there's something we must do' and the 'what they did' is one of the funnier lines I've seen in a fanzine in years.

Forstchen also wrote a religious heresy trilogy set in an ice age world, and *The Union Forever*, a civil war ACW Regiment stranded in another world. (Think 'The Mysterious Island' in which there were several hundred artificers, rather than a couple of them.) Forstchen also wrote a novel based on an SF spacewar game. I'd have to say that his style when he is his own man is far better than his style writing in another's world; modesty forbids commenting on the rest of your assertion about writing styles.

Aye, Matey: Elaine has the habit of investigating things that are likely to kill her. Sometimes more than once. Some people never learn. Some things get very frustrated.

Peacable Demeanor: The GM was afraid to talk to me... What did you do to the poor fellow the last time? Haven't we warned you about the flamethrower tank before?

Oh, you got your wish. You got to GM with various Hunt players and GMs. Indeed, you would be welcome back, though I believe that Barb will want to reduce the combat effectiveness of your character. On the other hand, we keep shipping our GMs out to you (Willner, Ruggels). I did have the impression that local cyberpunk campaigns (ask Marc) were underviolent. wrto being recognizable afterwards by body language as the character you have just played, we would prefer that you not play an ax murderer in a game if I'm likely to meet you soon thereafter.

A game where almost everyone is a strong player can be strange. Every so often the strong players who have been dominating conversation discover they are off on their adventure, and some of the less obtrusive players' characters haven't called in to headquarters yet.

Snail hallucinations while driving. Do we now understand your approach to driving in Massachusetts? I trust you have seen a picture of that noble Japanese vehicle, the S-Cargo municipal delivery van. (The one shaped like a giant snail shell.)

'Since at that time he was doing... perhaps the list should be 'three things well', counting you as the third?

Once upon a time the late Glenn Blacow's gaming group had a discussion of the Modesty Blaise room entry technique. It was argued by the female players that the technique would no longer be effective. As I vaguely recall,

the male players were willing to support the effectuality of the method, but blandly suggested that in light of the GMs medical condition that there should not be an attempt to prove the claim experimentally, or something like that.

Thanks for the comments on my novel. I did work hard on making the five odd characters more different from each other before I sent the novel off to the first potential publisher last July. I trust that there was not a difficulty telling the difference between the five and von Pickering. I am still waiting to hear from the first potential publisher. Any season now. Apparently a typical SF publisher these days gets 3,000 novel submissions a year (the same 3,000 make the rounds of all ten or so publishers). Perhaps 10% of these are really publishable. Word processing has made it far easier to turn out submissions that are nominally marginally acceptable in certain senses, e.g., all of the words are correctly spelled, in the sense that their spelling corresponds to an actual English word, albeit not always one that the author seems likely to have intended.

Did we ever see the picture of the catperson? It would appear, unless numbers get transferred, that artwork for issue 200 of *The Wild Hunt* is unlikely ever to be used.

How to deal with your 'interrupt processor' character? At the point he made his comment, having one of the bricks in the group turn to him and say 'Now, friend interrupt, I promised that if anyone threatened to hurt her we would beat the living daylights out of them, so that the threatener would surely die, did I not?' and 'Now, surely you a person of high moral standing and character, are you not?' 'So you will certainly be available to help me keep my promises, will you not?' 'No, all you have to do is look me in the eye and repeat...' at which point the brick kicks the interrupt player's character in the stomach. Hard. And perhaps trods them into the ground orreversibly.

Why should we perish the thought that you have a rugrat? You seem far more plausible as a maternal parental unit than many fen I've met. Though I gather that you do not. wrto cheating, say rolling 13 on a d6, one might sometimes check to make sure that people can do math right.

Softly, Softly: Welcome to Interregnum, both of you. Sorry to hear that small boys can occasionally be so rude. You have somewhat missed the novel segments I ran a year back; three of the important female characters were about Tara's age. (I suspect one of them would be found reasonable as someone to meet, though mother might be upset to learn she took Tara flying without benefit of mechanical assistance, one might be a bit unnerving (telepath and fanatic chess player), and the third would be really strange.) (If you can read an MS-DOS disc, I could send a copy for critiquing.) (The novel also has

two boys, both of whom would fit in with the local male population.)

How would local gamers react to an 11 year old player? I imagine it would depend a bit on how well behaved she was. The 11-year-old (I'd estimate) participant at the Arisia frp panel last year was well treated. In some groups, an elevener might be unhappy. There are sometimes groups in which you have to be rather assertive, rather than polite, or you get thoroughly ignored. This can be difficult for someone who is by training instinctively polite, as I infer is the case here.

Some people at 11 are a bit unnerved when they are first introduced to tactics. The late Glenn Blacow once described joining a high-school-age-group campaign in which the GM had run the Hold of the Frost Giants (or something like that; a commercial module). The heroes had tried to take it twice, and all their characters had needed resurrection afterwards, both times. Glenn introduced a slightly different approach. They took the place and wiped out the frost giants, most of the heroes taking no hit points of damage. GM: You cheated! That's impossible! The GM completely rebuilt the place, totally upgraded all of the defending monsters, etc. Glenn introduced a slightly different approach. They took the place and wiped out the frost giants, most taking no hit points of damage. At this point, the players began to understand the tactics concept.

Research in stories depends a great deal on who is writing, and about what. In a fantasy novel, many discrepancies can be passed off as magic. Consistency is more readily demanded than research. I believe that you happen to have hit a novel section (Issue 7? There was a combat section, and a flashback) that was for me unusually light on characterization. Also, the current fiction section is something I wrote a long time ago, which is rather lighter on characterization than my more recent work.

Strange Sands: RAEBNC

Fiction

Chapter Four (League of Democracies).

North of the Dorrance Academy, beyond the Sea of Dreams and the Lyssan Empire, across Pargana Major and its world-straddling Daurine and Taurine mountains ranges lay the lands of Pyrrin and his League. The myriad island and coastal republics of the Sea of Silence, farflung Khemai, the hills and plains and rolling grainfields of Krefizond were all subject to his will and command. All paid tribute to him. All were intensely loyal to their Savior, the Great Shield of the People, the Sun Who Shines Both Day and Night, Long-Lived, Long- Long-Lived, Long-Long-Long-Long-Lived Pyrrin, Liberator of the East and the West, Great Supreme Commander of the Hosts of Free-

dom, Majestic Helmsman of the Fleets of the Liberation, High Sky Marshal of the Empyrean, and other honorifics too soporific to endure prolonged repetition.

The center of his realm was at Cartagna, tucked in a shoulder of the Khetane mountains, where stood his capital, his treasuries, his chief armories and archives. From the twelve corners of the earth, his spies and diplomats brought him intelligence about the doings of the great and small. There stood The Institute of Useful Arts, the training-center for his mages, loyal to the League, trained not in the arcane or theoretical but instead the most practical and helpful aspects of the Great Art. Here decades of ceaseless labor had converted mountains of solid granite into palaces and fortresses, a great redoubt against which the mightiest of attacking armies would hurl themselves in vain. To the west, facing the vast plains of Krefizond, were barracks and arsenals where the Legions of the League – men and dwarves and sea-trolls and elves alike – drilled and trained in constant readiness for their next engagement, their next opportunity to extend the Peace of the League to the distant parts of the earth.

Atop his palace, surrounded by loyal courtiers and jostling ambassadors, the archmage Pyrrin brooded on his recent victories. In Pargana Major, two decades of campaigning, two decades of slow sieges and clever subversions, had at last given him effective control of the passes of the Chakrosh. Now, his lines of supply secured, his armies could pour through from Efryzum and Chumanium to storm the Dominion of Haigalras. Haigalras taken, the fords and bridges of the Muabbin River would be his, so that the forces of the League could sweep through the Muabbin valley, liberating a thousand towns and villages, baronies and sees from the strangulation of feudal lords and the subtle dominion of court mages. It would be one more step for freedom, one less step for government of, by, and for the archmage. The Empire of Lys would find its eastern frontier, so long at peace that its towns were unfortified, under constant attack. Now, as Fall crept over the world, Pyrrin's armies marched south, finding in their path stocked granaries and secretly prepared barracks, from which they would sally forth as soon as spring melted the snows from the Chakrosh.

Elsewhere, matters had gone badly. Arburg-am-Tressin had seemed a grape ripe for the picking. Its Duke was a fool, while its natural government, its Council of Syndics and Factors, was a ready target for subversion and manipulation. Twenty years' work had gone into preparing the city, into placing the right people in positions of authority. As Pyrrin had planned, there had been bloody revolt within Arburg. The Duke fled, while Pyrrin's fifth columnists took control. The second stage of the rebellion, in which Pyrrin's fifth columnists so degraded custom and tradition that democracy became attractive to the citizenry, had been well underway.

The Duke tried to recover his city. He summoned his levies, finagled for aid from surrounding principalities, and put Arburg to siege. That was expected, though the Duke had been surprisingly effective at raising assistance from neighbors. However, repeated simulations had shown that the siege was essentially certain to fail, especially once units of the Corps of Guards, disguised as Syndic-hired mercenaries, managed to infiltrate the town. The Corps, while trained with sword and bow, spear and pike, was primarily a corps of wizards, providing the defenders with the thaumaturgic support they would otherwise lack.

Contrary to all expectation, the siege had succeeded. Arburg's defenses fell to the first touch of pressure. How? Were there traitors within the Guards? Had someone given the Duke a secret to shatter the northern gatetower? Witnesses were scarce. Someone had very systematically killed all the Guards in the gatetower. Now Pyrrin himself would settle the question. The Guards were dead, but their memories remained in Pyrrin's reach.

Atop a pinnacle of rock, Pyrrin's closest confidants awaited his arrival. Lord Chancellor Miraphernes, a wizened old man in draped in umber, stood by the casting circle, a small steel-bound book lying unlocked on the lectern before him. The circle itself was a disc of polished alabaster, not quite three yards across, within which glowed the faintest touch of eldritch illumination. The Chancellor repeated once again what was to be done, preparing for his task as Remembrancer for Pyrrin's casting. Lord General Blaine, a tall, attractive man wearing a grass-green doublet trimmed with brazen lace, waited on the other side of the circle, ready to view the answers his Lord provided. He had done the planning for the coup in Arburg. Upon his shoulders had fallen the greatest disappointment when Arburg remained enslaved by the mage-tyrants.

Pyrrin – his given name remained a secret from even his closest advisors – slipped from his sandals. He was a tall, thin man, seemingly of late middle age, with small pointed beard and long, well-waxed moustache. His tunic was a simple gray, bearing no frivolous ornament, worked on its hems only with wards of guard and aversion. His feet touched the casting circle, setting ripples of phosphorescence circling across the stone.

"Guard," he spoke. A wave of one hand created within the stone a dim circle of golden light, barely visible against the flicker of the cressets burning above each of his witnesses. Within the light swam ill-glimpsed runes, protecting the caster from the recoil of his own spells.

The Chancellor touched the first page before him, passing his fingers over a carefully inked pattern of lines, stars, and circles. The pattern's double swiftly appeared on the wall opposite. Pyrrin spoke "I name thee 'Life's Begin-

ning!" He made intricate gestures with his hands, bringing the pattern on the wall to glowing life, one fragment at a time. The rune was a fading of shadows, the cry of a baby's first breath, a seed splitting open to put forth its first delicate shoot.

Here could be seen secret of good spell-casting: teamwork gave real power. Outside the circle, Remembrancers provided the pattern of the runes, projecting them where those within the circle could see. Those within the circle, the Casters, then invoked the rune, supplying the projected rune-image with the fire of the Presence until it came to life. The Remembrancer usually provided the thoughts behind the runes, the plan of use which gave the spell its intent. The Caster's will then drove the runes to effect the Remembrancer's desires.

The Chancellor raised his hand from the page, which obediently turned, to reveal another more darkly worked pattern. The image appeared next to the first; Pyrrin's gestures brought it gradually to lurid life. "I name thee 'Life's End'" he spoke. The rune brought with it the sweet smell of the charnel house, the gentle yield of soil freshly turned over new-dug graves, the distant acid taste of fresh blood.

Once again, the Chancellor turned a page. One more rune appeared. Pyrrin, breathing more deliberately, passed his closed hands over each other, then brought them back together. "I name thee 'Life's Return'". With the rune's name came the creak of an opening coffin, a gasp of too-long-held breath, the first color of a crocus raising through March snows. Blaine, saying nothing, saw a hint of a pattern, an overall similarity between the three runes. He closed his eyes. He had seen, not clearly but all too sharply for his comfort, bits and fragments of a greater rune – the Rune of Life's Cycle of which the runes before him were merely aspects.

"Tirmack! Tirmack Wanfog! Come hence! I call thee!" Pyrrin spoke a name: the commander of his Guards in Arburg, slain when the Gate-tower fell. Very slightly, Pyrrin's hands shook. To bring the Guard he must call the Guard's personal name-rune; Calling a Rune went far beyond Naming in the power it demanded of the caster.

A ghostly figure appeared across the circle from Pyrrin. It wore the uniform of the Guards, plum-tunicked and scarlet caped; after death the ghost assumed the dress it best knew. A sharp-sighted observer would have discerned, in the space around the ghost, a dimlit view of the Lesser Gulf of Heaven, the Death Arch spanning it, a pathway leading from the casting circle across the Arch into Elysium.

"Who calls?" spoke the ghost. "For I am beyond life, beyond all travails, enjoying eternal reward."

"It is I," spoke Pyrrin, "I thy lord and master. I, Pyrrin.

Speak, show me your memories, then return to thy reward. Now tell me: The Gate Tower of Arburg. It fell! How? By whose hand?"

"I acknowledge thee, my Lord," answered the ghost, "but I know only what I saw. Someone entered the tower, or was admitted by treachery, penetrated to the dampers, and wrecked them. I did not see this person. I had left a dozen men to guard the dampers, all swordsmen of the eighth circle or higher, all but one of whom has given me his respects in Elysium. They were struck down. I give you their names. The mages in the tower, those others who fell bravely, have their own Paths among the Dead; I've seen them not."

Pyrrin dismissed his Captain, summoning instead the guards, each of whom told the same story, of fighting and being slain. The Remembrancer nodded at Pyrrin, then sent up another rune for Pyrrin to bring to life. 'The Pilgrim's Eye' gave visual form to the memories of the dead. Pyrrin's gesture empowered the rune, then brought the dead before it.

The fight in the gate-tower raged before them. A dozen guards sat in a small room, waiting for some indication of a direction or form to an attack. The doors were rune-locked; walls were bespelled. A door swung open, its locking rune shattered like plaster under a hammer. What entered could be seen only as a blur – a region which was smeared, like an inked illustration on which hot water had fallen, so no image remained for the eye. The region leaped across the room, leaving a half dozen guards dead in its wake. Far more slowly, the guards came to their feet drew their swords. At the blur's periphery, a sword could vaguely be seen, sometimes in focus, sometimes not. After a few moments, the memories came to their end: the guards, having died, saw no more.

Pyrrin called forth more of the dead, each of whom gave the same account of their deaths. All memories of their foe were gone, so that when his spellcasting was complete Pyrrin had no better a picture of his foe than previously. An unseen swordsman, protected by the most potent sort of amulets, had swept through everything in his path, ignoring counterspells, bathing in fire barriers, slaughtering skilled warriors like so many sheep. With no more questions to ask, Pyrrin dismissed his runes, one at a time, then extinguished the circle.

"I don't understand," said Blaine. "What happened? All I could see was a ghost, a cloud of smoke and light."

"Precisely," said the Chancellor. "Who went there? Whoever he was, he stripped those who fought him of their memories, so none recall what they faced. These are the marks of a powerful sorcerer. Does the Academy now send its own archmages against us? I doubt that – Wendane would have warned us by now."

"We fight someone unknown?" answered Blaine.

"Not precisely a new problem," remarked Pyrrin. "When your armies take the field, can you name every one of the enemy's footmen? Here someone hides. The hiding is elaborate, typical of the tyrants of the Dorrance Academy. This must be some minion of theirs. We'll urge our agents there to be more vigorous. They owe us much; we'll remind them of their dues. We'll find who it was. We already have some idea of our opponent. He downs strength potions by the quart. If he'd used spells, the wake in the Presence would have been visible. Even so, he must be a large man, broad-shouldered. Look at that parry!" Pyrrin recalled to sight a segment of the combat. "Only the strongest of warriors could block the strikes of three opponents in a single move. That requires enormous brute strength, not just perfect timing."

"My lord," spoke the Chancellor, "I fear that we must face the afternoon audiences. The Ambassador of the Freely Associated Commonwealths had various issues to lay before you."

"I know, I know. And I know what issues, too. The Ambassador, though, is still a bore, and not a sensible one, either. Very well. But late this afternoon, the sunset review - I will personally receive the salutes of whatever legion is making it. It's good for morale."

"That would be the Ninth, my lord," said Blaine. "Off for the Chakrosh tomorrow, too."

* * * * *

notes: Pyrrin embassies visit. love of subjects feeling of resp. dismay at way democracies develop. What do you mean we can't just print paper money?

notes: Pyrrin Legion revies. Description of military equipment and its range. Pyrrin the egomaniac, who loves his citizens to worship him. ratio of mages to inf. Only so many talented. Flying carpets, sea trolls, regiment stones.

* * * * *

Chapter Five (Dragons, Skyborn)

The cavern was brilliantly lit by thousands of false stars, incandescent points of light strewn across its tiles ceiling. Carpeting was heaped with swords and rings, armor and tools and pottery and massy jewelled goblets, skins and skeletons of birds and beasts ranging from the common to the mythical to the extinct, each an archetype for its kind, each as fresh and sharp and dust-free as the day it came into existence. A competent mage would have noted that each item was bespelled, caged in a ward of temporal stasis.

Atop a granite dias, surrounded by the finest items of

their collections, three Great worms lay sharing their meditations.

"Another hundredth of a rotation [Image: the sweep of far galaxies, driven by galactic rotation across the nearer stars. Image: the birth and death of hot, short-lived stars, rising from the infall of cold hydrogen, igniting, soaring to brilliant life, then passing from existence, all before a single rotation had passed.] {Mindset: The onrush of apparent time, Now as an ever-propagating tridimensional membrane bifurcating tetradimensional space-time, the remembered galactic rotations a many-stranded twisted rope of trajectories trailing pastwards}", noted the largest, "and we have a new dance." [Image: the weave of the planets across the sky, a stately galliard.] [Image: the previous cycle of close approaches, harmonies driving each other into dissonance, planetary motion slipping from quasi-periodic to pseudochaotic, minor orbital corrections made megayears ago insuring that planetary orbits restabilize so as to afford salubrious climates and especially spectacular planetary conjunctions for all parties.] {Mindset: Apparent time as a computer, permitting with patience facile display of novel mathematical functions. Mindset: Apparent time as a barely relevant to practical considerations, life being spent on the throughways and byways of metatime. }

"This cycle I prefer not to miss," answered the second, "having devoted enough time to ensure that the next cycle will be as spectacular as any before it." [Image: the orbital elements of the star cluster, carefully measured, every mass determined, every motion observed, all to determine the circumsolar gravitational potential at the time of dissonance with the necessary exactitude. Image: Observatories scattered across near space, confirming the precision of the extrasolar model, confirming that the perhaps-needed supply of comets were ready to correct deviant planetary orbits, all significant traces of observatories and comets then being hidden from the system's ephemeral inhabitants] {Mindset: Solar system as toy kaleidoscope, carefully tuned to yield the most spectacular possible orbital dances.} {Mindset: the universe as a complex albeit non-unique display tool.}

"Thusfar the ephemerals have been most cooperative about leaving the stage undisturbed." [Image: Tegelsorin, torn from her orbit, her heart hurled earthwards leaving veils of stone in decaying orbits.] [Image: The third speaker in human guise, assisting a tall short-bearded man with the last preparations for his moon-shattering spell.] {Mindset: The inner moon as a construction platform, a scaffolding which needed removal before construction could be said to be complete. Mindset: ephemeral beings, numbering their lives in planet-orbit years or centuries, so totally confined to apparent time that their mental lifespans were at most infinitesimally different from their bodily duration in apparent time.}

"There is an eddy moonward, a clawswith hindwards of the nearest body." [Image: a winking point of light trailing Tegel-La across the zenith.] [Image: orbits as tetradi-dimensional minimum paths, the winking light marching along an ever-winding spiral in disregard for gravity about it.] {Mindset: the Universe as a clockwork toy, meant for the exclusive use of the Elder Race, not for disturbance by ephemerals.]

"A mere trifle. A charming decoration. The ephemerals of sunwards and starswards see a puzzle beyond their ken—us—and seek to divine its solution. If it obstructed our sight of the stage, I'd ask them to remove it forthwith." [Image: Tegel-La's trailer, potentially blocking line of sight to major conjunctions.] [Image: pastward motions through the upper air, disturbing a cloud sculpture, swept to ground and crushed with a single claw-stroke.] {Mindset: ephemerals as bit players, performing their moment's role and disappearing like the seasons.} {Mindset: indistinction between polite requests and commands backed with threat of death.}

"Perhaps the time comes to seek a less crowded stage." [Image: hordes of midges perturbing one's dreams, some midges more ignorant but no weaker than an Elder One] [Image: formation of a new universe via expansion of a tetradi-dimensional bubble—an energy-swollen aneurysm on the surface of the cosmos—from the prior universe into the surrounding dodecadimensional plenum.] {Mindset: unacceptable neighbors may easier be avoided than improved.} {Mindset: pointlessness of reasoning with creatures of virtually zero lifetime.}

"Patience, patience. They too will pass, as did others before them." Dragoneyes crept slumberwards, layer after layer of nictating membrane sweeping shut, as the speakers contemplated their long-gathered hoard.

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Z: Cheryl Marshall-FitzRyan

Captain and Mistress

Flower of Atlantis

08-27-337-Noon (Absolute): R17000/Th37/Z835

1. Be pleased to learn that the High Council of Advisors, in recognition of your great wisdom, esteemed patience, and sound balance sheet, and the name and glory of your illustrious aforenamed vessel, has bestowed upon

you as your Century-Dues the unspeakably humble task of recovering certain parts of the Guild-Tithes of the Free Associated Commonwealth of Padilla – or such part of them as may remain within the Padilla system (App. A, attached).

2. Be pleased to learn that the High Council of Advisors meeting in full and solemn session has empowered you (App. B, attached) to conduct investigations, examine records, constitute Boards of Inquiry, and perform such other actions as will in your judgement be effective in recovering to the Guild its rightful properties, without excessive prejudice to the Guild's other rightful profits.

3. Be pleased to learn that the High Council of Advisors has granted you in lieu of expenses full and complete rights to any intellectual property arising from the to-be-investigated (mis)expenditure of funds on "The North Polar Development Project" (Appendix C, 470 datablocks following).

4. Be pleased to learn that the Padilla System is copopulated by Freely Associated Commonwealths of the Guild, Members of the Confederation of Worlds, Dominions of the Crucis Rosae, worlds generally understood to adhere to the Straight Circle and the Rainbow Unification, and various neutral powers, all having potential rights in the aforementioned North Polar Development Project (App. D, Attached). The High Council of Advisors strongly discourages actions which risk creating large negative profit correlations with any of these groups.

5. Be pleased to learn that the High Council of Advisors wishes you well with this simple and direct project for the joint profit of all Guild Members.

* * * * Long Live the Company! Wealth Liberates! Poverty Enslaves! * * * *

***** (Attachment): Dear Cheryl,

As you predicted, the parties against progress put another obstacle in your path. The Guild has been spent money on the 'North Polar Development Project' for the last year-hundred or more, no profit yet resulting. The allegedly loyal opposition appears to have been aware of the situation and sat on it until an appropriate time. I couldn't get you a cut of material profits, but the intellectual properties might be worth something. While satellite pictures of Padilla IV show nitwits in metal armor fighting with oversize knives, Confederation NavCharts give the planet four (unmanned) reconnaissance satellites. The Crucis Rosae system map notes without amplification that Padilla IV has 5 indigenous sophont species, a surplus of several over orthodox law-of-nature limits. Padilla III-VI and IX-XII are each spaced well under the

Bode-Kirkhamer limits, suggesting someone was playing games with planetary orbits. Padilla IV is suspect; 200 years back something dispersed one of its moons, dumped an indecent fraction of the linear momentum into its core, and dropped the core on a major city. The investigations appear to have been somewhat lacking in urgency, given that no-special-effect planet smashing devices are not common.

I've attached full library data (20 datablocks) on the system.

Try to find where the money went, and why nothing was done with the data. Appendix C represents enormous data taking and no analysis.

The North Polar Compact, read carefully, does say the the project is our property. Everyone else is a subcontractor. Have fun with the matrix thinkers. I had to tell our partners you were coming. The Crossheads will undoubtedly be at full flame about your bodily presence.

If other appeals to reason fail, the Flower of Atlantis has enough firepower to bring either humanoid partner to heel. The local jellyfish are relatively friendly and rational.

Don't do anything I wouldn't do.

Love,

Mom, AKA the Highest Cartelmeister

P.S. Cheryl, when she says "anything I wouldn't do" she refers to the null set. If you don't believe me, ask her about the space pirates and the porthole cover. Try to use some sense. Love, Dad.

CONFEDERATION OF WORLDS -

OFFICE OF THE SUPREME LIBRARIAN -

DIRECTORATE FOR NON-MEMBER RATIONALIZATION

The Especially Honorable and Systematically Illustrious Viton treSamdha Skythrax, Third UnderSubsecretary for Pacific Relations with Barbarians of the 9th Region of the Total Remembrance, memorializes

The Respectably Distinguished Hernando Descalvado, Acting Commander, Padilla IV Special Experimental Station, High Orbit, Padilla IV

It must regretfully be recalled that the robber barons have remembered that they pay the bills for your installation and do not earn profits of their usual depraved magnitude. They despatch the 'armed yacht' "Flower of At-

lantia" to investigate. Its captain has full Guild investigatory powers. It must regretfully be recalled that Guild Investigators are sometimes tactlessly direct in obtaining answers to embarrassing questions, particularly when they have substantial advantages in firepower. To avoid unnecessary embarrassment, the Directorate Against Overdue Lending Materials has ordered to your support Confederation Skycruisers Invaluable, Incomparable, Indecivable, Ineffable, and Incomparable.

It may fruitfully be recalled that robber barons' agents are Outer Rim brats on first extension, several being 'married' to each other. Most were probably subject to extensive engineering. The Captain's mother is known to have functioned in o- as well as n-mind, the requisite very large parallel processor array having been grown by the usual obscene means. Full details are attached (App. I). App. I should insure the Crossies complete non-cooperation with the Guild.

It must be recalled that the Remembrance would be best-served by a continuation of the present state of affairs, should this prove possible, or by a clear and fully-documented demonstration of someone else's guilt, if it should not.

ECHO OF FOGFALL SILVERMIST RAINBOW ALLIANCE

Timespace: XXXVIII.479191283126/hri

Corvankh(Pacifiers of Barbarians)

Timespace: XXXVIII.479191283743/Padilla

X(Overwatchers of the Gate? of the Patriarchs)

Thema: BREATHERS SEND SHIPMISTRESS

Modality: Revelatory

Voice Themator	Actor	Action	Actant
	BREATHERS	SEND	SHIP-MISTRESS
Expander	RIMFARERS	REQUEST	INVESTIGATION
Historicator	COMMONALITY	OBSERVES	PAD-IVC
Metaphorator	RIGHTEOUS	TERMINATE	IMBALANCERS
Anadvocate	POISON-BREATHERS	ATTACK	ELECT
Redactor	RIMTRADERS	HARMONIZE	PADILLA IVC
Harmonizer	RAINBOW-LINKED	SUPPORT	RIMFARERS

Commentationes:

Themator: BREATHERS (of poison) SEND (as inves-

tigator) SHIPMISTRESS (great- skilled, well-equipped, fanged (of ship) with entourage)

Expander: RIMFARERS (long-lived by self-choice, self-improved (body by genecontent exploration manipulation therapy), twice-minded by protoplasm + optical processor in-body interweave) REQUEST ((of their shipmistress) trade mutual damage: Clan of Self-Damagers and shipmistress/sept-follower) INVESTIGATION (compell other-speaking, weave truth, force balance of mutual damage)

Historicator: COMMONALITY (five-fold, Rimfarers/ Remembrancers/Hyperspacers/ Selves/Heretics, Deep-viewText Attached) OBSERVES (share-data, share-thoughts, share-shipspace, view down from above) PADILLA IV (Gate to the Forefathers? place (of mysteries, of weapon world-shatterer, of barbarians))

Metaphorator: RIGHTEOUS (pure-minded, septagon-thinking) TERMINATE (justly persuade to Way(of 7-fold truth), divide, slaughter without salt) IMBALANCERS (acceptors (of other-damage without self-damage, of share-data without sharing self-data))

Anadvocate: POISONBREATHERS (deceitful, straight-minded, oneminded, insane) ATTACK (confuse (with alien monsters(of Library or Hyperspace)), compell self-damage, inflict other-damage, use (as food)) ELECT (echo of FogFall SilverMist, adherents of Rainbow Alliance, awaiters of forefathers-in-hiding, speakers of multilogical truth)

Redactor: RIMTRADERS (practiced self-damagers) HARMONIZE (seek to balance, maintain community) PADILLA IVC (joint exploratory satellite, commonality (all- spoken mutual creation), home (of Rainbow + Heretic Eaters, Remembrancer + Hyperspace Breathers), great seeking eye (not-yet-viewer of forefathers))

Harmonizer: RAINBOW-LINKED (of Padilla IVC) SUPPORT (obey, observe commonality- members, guide to path of righteousness (with voice and fang (Monstrator-Class battlecruisers Tooth-gnasher, Macerator of Small Beasts)) RIMFARERS (assumed right-speaking, assumed self-damagers)

* * * * *

NORTH POLAR DEVELOPMENT PROJECT INTEROFFICE MEMO

A: Marianne Euphocles, Primus Archimaga, Autonomous Zone of the Crucis Rosae, High Orbit, Padilla IV

Z: Hernando Descalvado, Acting Commander, Padilla IV Special Investigative Station

We are appalled to learn that Guild moneychangers, in

abusing their nominal right to insult our honor by reviewing the financial and material records of this Station, have despatched not an auditor of a Great House but an Abomination of the Outer Rim, a creature one third woman, one third flesh's distortion, one third antilife grown from flesh. We trust you understand the impossibility of our confronting this *thing* in person, and will arrange suitable intermediaries.

Also, preliminary interlocutories of Company auditors revealed extensive use of incorrect records. We have, of course, transmitted to Novaya Durham our personal records, recorded with time-stamping, showing the alleged documents to be falsified. We presume that you have done the same.

Finally, please be advised that by happy chance the 318th Squadron of the Holy Peace Flotilla, including septiremes Thoth-Padma and Mary of Alexandria, pentareme Refulgator, various triremes, and support vessels, will soon arrive at Crucis Rosae orbital starport Tupiza (Padilla VI). By remarkable coincidence, their visit may reasonably be expected to outlast resolution of the abovementioned epiphenomena. You are doubtless aware that Flotilla of the Holy Peace Standing Orders refer extensively to the maintenance of the safety and honor of the Archimagate regardless of consequences, as was demonstrated at Palma Batavia.

* * * * *

Cheryl Marshall-FitzRyan raged across her flight deck, Guild dispatches crumpled in one long-fingered hand. Her officers paled at the sight of her face. Most had been ship's company for a decade or more; perhaps two had seen her so much as mildly perturbed. Angrily, she lowered her five and a quarter feet into the command chair and coupled a data-cable to one wrist. Her o-mind - the optical computer in her chest, as much a part of her mentality as the n- mind of her organic brain - reached for the datafiles which accompanied the dispatch. For the briefest instant, n-mind's vision blurred; o-mind had scanned the dispatch's Appendices, reformed them, and dropped key parts through visual centers into n-memory, letting her bring her complete mind to bear on the problem at hand.

"Darn it! They've done it again!" she announced to no one in particular. "Another year gone - tied up in playing book-keeper, unless I want to forfeit Company membership." The more senior officers shuddered at the remark; Cheryl's reputation was such that she might be considering the step. "That might be a trifle excessive," one remarked. "After all, how many milliseconds can a book-keeping audit take?"

Cheryl's response was to dump dispatches, Appendices

and all, through datacable to her crew. Bursts of light pulses, travelling a foot every nanosecond, sped down optical fibers, transmitting memories from o-mind to o-mind. Grumbles of o-thought, followed eventually by anguished protests of n-thought, and ever-so-slowly by physical responses of dismay, whirled across the room.

[Well?] she asked, o-mind to o-mind. [Let's spend a few seconds looking at this. We've two contradictory sets of financial records — so far! — one each from Confederation and Crucis Rosae. No records yet from methanovore partners.]

[Other Data? 470 datablocks? A half an exabyte of data? Indices, location of? An exabyte of uncatalogued data? Joke, tasteless statement of??] Second Engineer Jeremy Grantham's had ruthlessly stripped his o-personality of excess verbiage.

[suppressed giggle. Indices, non-existence of(?) Overt fraud of research protocols?? Old-line humans really do have brains of mush.] Cheryl's answer lagged the question by tens of nanoseconds. [Analyzing that pile of non-garbage — it appears to be good, but was never systematically studied (easier perhaps to steal the allocated research budget?) — will take days, not seconds. The financial records will need physical audits to check.]

[It appears to me,] Flight Officer Barbara Grantham languidly inserted, [that the library blocks of General Intelligence Reports are rather better organized, albeit a trifle dependent on heresay. If you'll allow me a millisecond, I believe I can give a digest.]

* * * * *

PADILLA SYSTEM
R175370/Th37/Z572:5.73,57.213,1.317

(Absolute position and velocity, Year 0 absolute)

18 worlds, III-VIE and IX-XII with sophont populations.

I, II: Hot rocks, no life. Left fallow for future Galactic Generation.

III: Freely Associated World of the Guild. Human settled ca. -2500 abs (1st Great Expansion) Contacted by Guild -932 abs. Associated World status -810 abs. 108 sovereignties, 72 Guild/12 neutral/13 Confederation/7 Crucis Rosae/3 Empire of the Eastern Arm, so called/1 (alleged) Rainbow Unification. Indigenes had intrasystem exploration at contact date, Tech Level ca. 24.

V: Confederation of Worlds. Human/Prini settled ca. -2500 abs. Contacted by Guild -932 abs. Prini of Confederation Library obtained reunion of local Prini, humans acceding, -885 abs. 13 sovereignties, 9 Confederation, 3 neutral, 1 Crucis Rosae. Tech Level ca. 20 at reunion.

VI: Crucis Rosae. Lightly settled by ca. 15 species in period -5000 to -2000. Largely agricultural. Contacted by Guild -932 abs. Planet assigned with consent of locals to Crucis Rosae, based on Ley line convergences, -700 abs. 537 sovereignties, most Crucis Rosae or nominal neutral, 3 archipelagic alleged Straight Circle (?). Tech level 14 at time, diverged under Crucis tutelage.

VII, VIII small, cold, N₂/CO₂ atm. No present pop. Indigenous lower life. Moons show signs of repeated use by same species, at separated intervals over past 2 cycles (ca. 120 megayears). Full Library search by Confederation identified no plausible species. Estimated size of unknown species: ca 10-50 tons, 20-40 m. in length. Appendicular details attached.

IX-XII: hydrogen/methane, cold-cored. All populated by methanovores over last Cycle, dates uncertain. Crucis Rosae flatly asserts Rainbow Union and Straight Circle followers both present.

XIII-XVI: very cold rocks, no life.

XVII: T 3.4 K. Significant cryolife. World left fallow for future galactic cycle.

XVIII: Extremely cold rock. No life. Repeatedly used by same species as VII, VIII over past 120 megayears. Clear foundations of astronomical observatories still present, implying the users were native to this system. No candidate species is obvious.

IV: Ca. 5 intelligent species. Human, presumed settled, well before -2500; anomalously early for First Expansion. Three humanoid species, presumed native — Confederation Library fails to identify them. One non-humanoid species, not tool-using, but game-playing, reptilian, very large (; 15 feet in length.) Tech level overall VIII (stone castles, swords, bows & arrows, windmills). None plausibly suspected of space travel. 4 known artificial satellites, locally(!) launched. (One "launching" observed; no mechanism, just a bare satellite floating into low orbit.) Crucis Rosae star charts warn of planetary force fields. Prior to -218 abs., Padilla IV had two moons, one substantial and extremely bright (albedo ca. 0.85), one small and dark. In -218 abs, the small moon dispersed into an asteroid belt which still circles the planet. The moon's core impacted with Padilla IV in the far north, replacing a peninsula with a small deep sea and volcanic island; the core then transited into an unidentified hyperspace, eliminating momentum and kinetic energy dump into planetary crust. Process is presumed artificial. No mode of duplicating any of these effects has been proposed. North Polar Development project, founded -208 abs to investigate phenomenon, built populated reconnaissance satellite at anti-Lagrange point of surviving moon.]

[Oh, yes,] she continued, [the planetary orbits are odd. III-VI and IX-XII are pathologically close; you're talking

5 megamiles between orbits, not 20-40 megamiles. I'll need seconds to compute the stability from the orbital elements, but you don't form planets that close together, not on a star this cold.]

[Planetary force fields? At tech level VIII? And why did our people stay in orbit rather than landing?] Roberta Devries was the ship's security officer. [And look at the battle scenes I found:

Image: Massed pike formation, men in half-armour trimmed in green and black, receiving cavalry charge. Lancers, scarlet-caped, red-dyed horse-hair plumes adorning their helmets, bringing the charge home.

Image, taken with multiple cameras. Small clusters of men, armed with sword and bow, spaced tens and hundreds of yards apart, some hiding behind rocks and trees, others in hasty entrenchments. Actual combat: a ball of ruby light floating between a woman's hands, an arc of fire proceeding from it to dodge around trees and strike against a group of rocks, which shatter at the impact.

Image: groups of people and near-people floating in mid-air, standing on flat sleds, brilliantly woven with color, with absolutely no indication of the contragravity mechanisms, fighting with bow and arrow, sword, and slivers of light.]

[What is this stuff? The first is almost tech level VIII. But you can't use horses like that: they won't close with determined pike. That ruby gadget's a particle beam weapon, but how can it fire in curves? There's a Crucis Rosae annotation: that ball's not a Chaosmouth, however much it looks like one. The last scene looks like Prini contragrav infantry, but the sleds have almost no thickness - where's the anti-inertia coil hidden? And people with contragrav can hardly take knives seriously as weapons. This looks fake to me, done by someone who worked well, but didn't expect rational inspection.]

[The Project files - faked? Simulated?] asked Jeremy Grantham.

[Simulated well. datafile: standard tests for falsification of images, randomly applied, all unsuccessful That was my interpretation,] answered Roberta.

[Records of landing on Padilla IV? Anyone find anything?] [Nothing on the first settlement.] [Landings, - 2000 absolute, early intrasystem from Padilla III. Scattered references. Padilla III lost interest(?) in intrasystem flight?] [Unsuccessful attempts. Images: a Crucis Rosae quadrireme shattered while landing. Confederation landing teams, Tl'pongi Elite Scouts, dropped on a mountain range, then falling out of contact.] [Various police agencies, multiple references, disappearance of distinguished metallurgist/ thermodynamicist from Padilla V, ca. 300 years ago, leaving behind extensive notes imply-

ing he was emigrating to Padilla IV. In this epoch Padilla V lacked air travel, let alone spaceships. His notes contain information on Padilla IV geography, corroborated by the North Polar Development Project, not plausibly available on Padilla V with available technology. No explanation found. Extensive literary notes: comparison with Swift's Gulliver's Travels and the moons of Mars.] [Great set of excuses for poor exploration.] [We'll have to sort through the whole Project datafile, find the inconsistencies, to prove they faked it. Great! Just Great!]

[Command decision.] Cheryl's thoughts bore the atonality of leashed fury. [Divert to Padilla. Find and recover money. Physical audit of experimental station. Hope intellectual property has some value. Be on our way as soon as possible. My patience with the parties against progress is exhausted. If the Company wishes no longer to welcome Free Travellers, I can do without them. After all, Grandmother did.]

The conference had taken fractions of a second.

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Lone Comment On *The Wild Hunt*
#187

re *Dream Park*: The fictional series started out using holographic technology to create the visual effects. This has been changed in the latest volume of the series to virtual reality with the aid of goggles. This is due to Mr. Niven's belief that this is an easier achievable technology than holographic effects.

I do not believe it is copyrightable any more than an APA format is.

Douglas E. Jorenby

re SoloQuest: I am honestly glad that you had fun.

What opinions, exactly, am I to put more weight on?

What makes anyone a RuneQuest guru?
Ownership of the t-shirt?

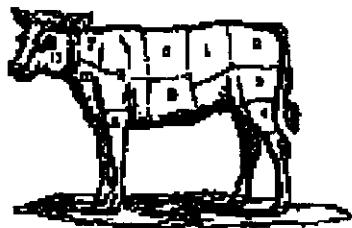
I believe that there has been more pages (and better pages at that!) of solo material published in the last five years than there has been in the five years or so that you speak of. (Do you remember the magical sword sharpener? What a crock!) The Metagaming stuff was good and enjoyable...the *T & T* stuff was spotty in quality.

Tara and Jenny Glover

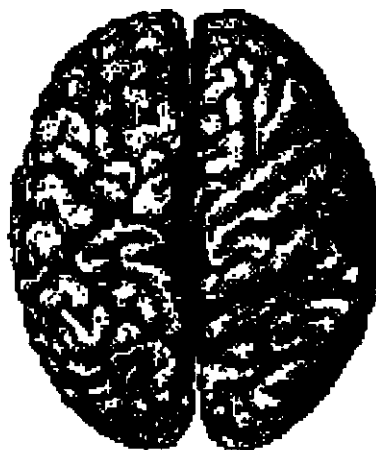
2 Welcome! But now I am jealous of Virgil!

Gilbert Pili

re SoloQuest: Thanks for the good words.



re rune: ✠ = spirit.



Do People Still Play That Game ?

My friends and I have begun playing AD & D. We decide we wanted to play something that was fun and did not take a lot of effort to use the rules. We played enough of this game when we were in high school to remember how to do it still. Our current goal is to vanquish the giants in the G series of modules. We will probably continue on into the sequels of that series. I am playing an elf fighter/magic-user. The other night we had fun fighting goblins and rescuing a village. Here is part of my characters background:

Lone survivor of a previously unknown and virulent fungal plague that struck Shal-Nar, his sylvan village, a delirious Thanos Barkskin was found wandering near the human village of Triloc, nursed back to health, and taught the ways of the fighter/magic user by the local feudal lord. Years later he returned to the woods and joined another village of sylvan elves; there was but a trace of his home village to be found. Thanos believes that humans allied with orcs (using the symbol of a flaming skull on their shields) are responsible for the destruction of his village due to their sighting near his village a few days prior to the death of the first villager from the plague.

山三〇.: 父五〇三六九六△十山三〇.: 父五〇三六九六△十山三〇.: 父五〇三六九六△十

Explanation/Description: When the magic-user casts this spell, the recipient becomes immune to any disease causing spell of third or lower level for the duration of this spell. If the recipient of this spell is exposed to a disease by non-magical means, he is allowed to make a system shock roll. If this roll is made, the recipient suffers no effects from this disease and resists further exposures of the same disease for 24 hours (or until this spell ends, whichever is shorter) with absolutely no effects. If this system shock roll is not made successfully, the target of the disease is subject to normal disease exposure rules for this one exposure; if the character then fails to resist the disease through normal exposure rules, this spell still provides some protection. The character takes only 1/2 the damage and/or effects of the disease; if the disease is terminal, the disease takes twice as long to kill the character. This spell provides absolutely no protection from Lycanthropy.

INWO

The following is a fairly complete list of INWO cards. The rarity of each card is an educated guess. There is a high probability of error in this list.

— Groups —		
<u>Name</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Rarity</u>
A.M.A.	Group	C
Al Gore	Personality	C
American Autoduel Association	Group	C
Anti-Nuclear Activists	Group	C
Antiwar Activists	Group	R
B.A.T.F.	Group	U
Bank Of England	Group	R
Big Media	Group	C
Bill Clinton	Personality	C
Bjørnø	Personality	C
Black Activists	Group	C
Boy Sprouts	Group	C
Brazil	Place	C
C.I.A.	Group	R
Cable TV	Group	C
California	Place	C
Canada	Place	R
Cattle Mutilators	Group	R
Center For Disease Control	Place	U
CFL-AIO	Place	R
China	Place	R
Church Of Elvis	Group	U
Clone Arrangers	Group	C
Comic Books	Group	U
Congressional Wives	Group	U
Conspiracy Theorist	Group	C
Count Dracula	Personality	R
Cycle Gangs	Group	C
Dan Quayle	Personality	C
Democrats	Group	U
Dentists	Group	C
Deprogrammers	Group	U
Dinosaur Park	Place	U
Druids	Group	C
Eco-Guerrillas	Group	C
EFF	Group	R
Elders Of Zion	Group	R
Elvis	Personality	R
Empty Vee	Group	C
England	Place	C
Evil Geniuses for a Better Tomorrow	Group	R
F.B.I.	Group	C

Who is John Galt? #10

山III O.: 父X OIII 大※G Δ† 山III O.: 父X OIII 大※G Δ† 山III O.: 父X OIII 大※G Δ†

— Groups —		
Name	Type	Rarity
Fast Food Chains	Group	C
Federal Reserve	Group	U
Feminists	Group	U
Fidel Castro	Personality	U
Fiendish Fluoridators	Group	C
Finland	Place	R
Flat Earthers	Group	C
Fjord Motor Company	Group	C
France	Place	C
Fraternal Orders	Group	C
Fred Birch Society	Group	R
Gay Activists	Group	U
George Bush	Personality	C
Germany	Place	R
Girlie Magazines	Group	C
Goldfish Fanciers	Group	R
Gordo Remora	Personality	C
Gun Lobby	Group	C
Hackers	Group	U
Hawaii	Place	C
Hillary Clinton	Personality	C
Hollywood	Place	U
I.R.S.	Group	U
Imelda Marcos	Personality	C
Intellectuals	Group	C
International Cocaine Smugglers	Group	C
International Communist Conspiracy	Group	R
International Weather Organization	Group	U
Israel	Place	R
Italy	Place	R
Japan	Place	C
Jimmy Hoffa	Personality	R
Joggers	Group	C
Junk Mail	Group	U
KKK	Group	C
L-4 Society	Group	U
Las Vegas	Place	C
Lawyers	Group	C
Libertarians	Group	R
Liquor Companies	Group	R
Loan Sharks	Group	C
Local Police Departments	Group	U
Madison Avenue	Group	C
Manuel Noriega	Personality	U
Margaret Thatcher	Personality	U
Media Sensation	Personality	C
MI-5	Group	U
Moonbase	Place	C
Moonies	Group	C

— Groups —		
Name	Type	Rarity
Moral Minority	Group	C
Mossad	Group	R
Multinational Oil Companies	Group	U
N.S.A.	Group	R
Nancy Reagan	Personality	R
NASA	Group	U
NATO	Group	R
Nephews Of God	Group	C
New York	Place	U
Ninjas	Group	C
Nuclear Power Companies	Group	C
Offshore Banks	Group	U
Ollie North	Personality	U
OPEC	Group	C
Orbit One	Place	U
Paranoids	Group	C
Pentagon	Place	C
Phone Company	Group	U
Phone Phreaks	Group	C
Pollsters	Group	R
Post Office	Group	U
Prince Charles	Personality	U
Princess Di	Personality	U
Professional Sports	Group	U
Psychiatrists	Group	U
Punk Rockers	Group	C
Recording Industry	Group	C
Red Cross	Group	R
Reformed Church Of Satan	Group	U
Religious Reich	Group	C
Republicans	Group	U
Rifkinites	Group	R
Robot Sea Monster	Group	U
Ronald Reagan	Personality	C
Rosicrucians	Group	C
Ross Perot	Personality	R
Russia	Place	C
S.M.O.F.	Group	R
Saddam Hussein	Personality	C
Saturday Morning Cartoons	Group	U
Savings & Loans	Group	R
Science Fiction Fans	Group	C
Secret Service	Group	R
Secular Humanists	Group	U
Semiconscious Liberation Army	Group	C
Silicone Valley	Place	U
Society For Creative Anarchism	Group	C
South American Nazis	Group	R
Stonehenge	Place	C
Subliminals	Group	R
Supreme Court	Group	R

山III O.: 父X OIII 大※G Δ† 山III O.: 父X OIII 大※G Δ† 山III O.: 父X OIII 大※G Δ†

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— Groups —		
Name	Type	Rarity
Survivalists	Group	C
Switzerland	Place	C
Tabloids	Group	U
Telephone Psychics	Group	C
Templars	Group	C
Texas	Place	R
The Mafia	Group	R
The Men In Black	Group	R
Tobacco Companies	Group	C
Trekkies	Group	C
Triliberl Commission	Group	R
TV Preachers	Group	C
Underground Newspapers	Group	R
United Nations	Group	C
Urban Gangs	Group	C
Vampires	Group	C
Vatican City	Place	C
Video Games	Group	C
Voudonistas	Group	U
W.I.T.C.H.	Group	C
Wall Street	Group	C
Wargamers	Group	C

— Illuminati Groups —
(Only available in Starter Sets)

Adepts Of Hermes	Illuminati	S
Bavarian Illuminati	Illuminati	S
Bermuda Triangle	Illuminati	S
Discordian Society	Illuminati	S
Gnomes Of Zurich	Illuminati	S
Servants Of Cthulhu	Illuminati	S
Shangri-La	Illuminati	S
The Network	Illuminati	S
UFOs	Illuminati	S

— Plots —		
18 1/2 Minute Gap	Plot	R
A Thousand Points Of Light	NWO	U
Agent In Place	Plot	R
Air Magic	Plot	U
Albino Alligators	Plot	R
Alternate Goals	Plot	C
An Offer You Can't Refuse	Plot	R
And STAY Dead!	Plot	C
Angst	Plot	R
Annual Convention	Plot	R
Are We Having Fun Yet	Plot	C
Assertiveness Training	Plot	C
Atomic Monster	Disaster!	C
Backlash	Plot	C
Bank Merger	Plot	U

— Plots —		
Name	Type	Rarity
Benefit Concert	Plot	C
Bigger Business	NWO	U
Bimbo At Eleven	Plot	C
Blitzkrieg	Plot	R
Blood, Toil, Tears And Sweat	Plot	C
Bodyguard	Plot	R
Botched Contact	Plot	U
Bribery	Plot	U
Car Bomb	Assassination!	C
Celebrity Spokesman	Plot	U
Censorship	Plot	U
Charismatic Leader	Plot	C
Chicken In Every Pot	NWO	C
Citizenship Award	Plot	C
Clone	Plot	U
Cold Fusion	Plot	R
Combined Disasters	Plot	U
Commitment	Plot	U
Computer Security	Plot	R
Computer Virus	Plot	U
Corruption	Plot	R
Counter-Revolution	Plot	R
Counterspell	Plot	U
Cover Of Darkness	Plot	R
Cover-Up	Plot	R
Criminal Overlords	Goal	U
Crop Circles	Plot	C
Currency Speculation	Plot	C
Deasil Engine	Plot	R
Deep Agent	Plot	C
Dictatorship	Plot	C
Dollars For Decency	Plot	U
Don't Forget To Smash The State	NWO	C
Double-Cross	Plot	C
Early Warning	Plot	C
Earth Magic	Plot	C
Earthquake	Disaster!	C
Eat The Rich!	Plot	R
Embezzlement	Plot	R
Emergency Powers	Plot	C
Energy Crisis	NWO	R
Epidemic	Disaster!	C
Exposed	Plot	C
Faction Fight	Plot	R
Fear And Loathing	NWO	U
Flower Power	Plot	U
Fjord	Plot	C
Foiled	Plot	U
Forgery	Plot	U
Fratricide	Goal	C
Freaking The Mundanes	Plot	U

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— Plots —

Name	Type	Rarity
Swiss Bank Account	Plot	C
Talisman Of Ahriman	Plot	C
Tax Breaks	Plot	U
Tax Reform	NWO	R
Terrorist Nuke	Plot	C
The Auditor From Hell	Plot	C
The Big Score	Plot	C
The Big Sellout	Plot	R
The Corporate Masters	Goal	R
The First Thing We Do, Let's Kill All The Lawyers	Plot	R
The Hand Of Madness	Goal	C
The Internet Worm	Plot	U
The Oregon Crud	Disaster!	R
The Second Bullet	Plot	C
The Stars Are Right	Plot	R
The Weak Link	Plot	R
The Weird Turn Pro	Plot	C
Tidal Wave	Disaster!	U
Time Warp	Plot	R
Tornado	Disaster!	C
Unlucky 13	Plot	R
Unmasked	Plot	R
Up Against The Wall	Goal	R
Upeaval	Plot	C
Volcano	Disaster!	U
Volunteer Aid	Plot	C
Voodoo Economics	Plot	C
Vultures	Plot	U
Whispering Campaign	Plot	C
Withering Curse	Plot	R
World Cup Victory	Plot	R
World Hunger	NWO	C
World War Three	NWO	R

— Resources —

Name	Type	Rarity
Angel's Feather	UMA	C
Ark of the Covenant	UMA	R
Bigfoot	Unique	C
Book Of Kells	UMA	U
Center For Weird Studies	Unique	C
Clipper Chip	Resource	C
Crystal Skull	UMA	R
Cyborg Soldiers	Gadget	R
Death Mask	UMA	U
Earthquake Projector	Gadget	C
Eliza	Gadget	U
Flying Saucer	UMA	C
Hallucinations	Resource	C
Hammer Of Thor	UMA	C

— Resources —

Name	Type	Rarity
Hidden City	Unique	U
Hitler's Brain	UA	R
Immortality Serum	Resource	R
Loch Ness Monster	Unique	C
Mercenaries	Resource	C
Midas Mill	UGA	C
Necronomicon	UMA	U
Orbital Mind Control Lasers	UG	C
Perpetual Motion Machine	UGA	R
Principia Discordia	UA	C
Rogue Boomer	Resource	C
Shroud Of Turin	UMA	R
Soul Burner	UMA	R
Spear Of Longinus	UMA	C
Suicide Squad	Resource	U
The Bronze Head	UMA	C
The Frog God	MA	C
The Holy Grail	UMA	R
The Library At Alexandria	Unique	U
Warehouse 23	Unique	U
Weather Satellite	Gadget	U
Xanadu	Unique	C



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SoloQuest

The Myths of Orlanth

Do to lack of computer time...no
SoloQuest this issue.

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The Parliament of Dreams #1

By Chris Aylott

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Introductions

Hello. My name is Chris, and I'm a fanzine-aholic.

I'm twenty-five, not quite six feet tall, bearded and glassed. I'm self-employed (more on that later) and live in an apartment near Davis Square in Somerville with my wife of six months and two psychotic cats. It's a pretty nice life.

I'm also a game-aholic — lots of roleplaying when I have the time and people to play with, otherwise card and board games, the sillier the better. I do play and collect *Magic: the Crack Pipe of Gaming*, but tend to prefer wackier games such as *Cosmic Encounter* or either version of *Illuminati*. I'm also a science fiction and fantasy reading junkie, a disaffected Trek fan, and (as you might guess from the title) a rabid *Babylon 5* fan.

As a B5 fan, I edit an APA of my own called *The Babylon Project*, which will print its third issue next month. I also edit a standalone SF and gaming fanzine called *Legion of Bitter Alumni*, mostly read by the alumni of the campus gaming group I joined in college. I've been tinkering seriously with various amateur publications for — eek, where did the time go? — almost six years now.

I've been reading *Interregnum* for several months (Peter's promotional copies paid off here — I had seen it discussed in the last few issues of *The Wild Hunt* but had been too lazy to subscribe until I had picked up a couple issues of IR from Pandemonium) and been meaning to start contributing for a couple of issues. It took a while, but I've stopped procrastinating and taken the plunge.

And that's about it. I think I'll stop talking about myself for a while and start talking about all of you instead. <g>

Comments on IR #9

The Log that Flies: The Wonder background has a very appealing dreamlike quality (even outside the discus-

sion of dreaming magic itself). Has this carried over into the game itself? From the background, I would almost expect (but have trouble imagining) gameplay that is “unreal” — not fake, but a sense of disconnection from the laws of our universe.

I was witness to your altercations with Factsheet Five on the Net, and was truly impressed by their complete lack of professionalism or manners. Not only can I not imagine behaving that way as the (paid or unpaid) staff of a publication, my mother would probably slap me around if she did. I haven't particularly bothered with Factsheet Five in my publishing efforts before, and now I'm rather glad I haven't. Bleah.

In happier news, I got the latest copy of *Shadis* (#17) today, and saw the very nice review of IR there. Concise, accurate, everything it should be. Now that's an operation that knows what it's doing.

A great pleasure finally meeting you at Arisia . . .

Session Notes: RAE . . . for some reason, your example from *The Maltese Falcon* creates a rather weird mental image/story premise in my head: a cleric-detective who solves murder mysteries by resurrecting the victim. Could be interesting, but has some thorny possibilities — would the murderer then claim that since the victim was now alive again, there was “no harm done”?

Refugee: RAEBNC

Who Is John Galt?: I've never had a chance to try RuneQuest, but I have to say that all the discussion of it in these pages has made it sound like a lot of fun.

The Eight-Track Mind: *Arena* sounded truly godawful — I'm afraid I decided to give it a miss, despite being tempted by the neat cards. I still don't understand why they aren't attacking the “historical” subjects of *Magic* — not only do the hints of the stories we've been given on the cards sound interesting, but it seems to me it would make more marketing sense. Is *Whispering Woods* (the second *Magic* novel) any improvement?

As a guy who has loved Trek since he was eight, I was sad that I couldn't bring myself to risk seven dollars admission to *Generations* against the chance I'll walk out of the theatre thinking my money was wasted. On the other hand, I took Deb to the Somerville Theatre showing of “Eat Drink Man Woman” with that seven dollars, so it worked out. I heartily recommend that movie, by the way.

The Sim City card game looks interesting.

Aye, Matey: Funny that the fellow on the T asked "There's roleplaying in Massachusetts?" In that issue of *Shadis* I mentioned earlier, writer Vince Raymond starts a history of roleplaying games, and mentions Boston as an early hotbed of the original D&D. Excellent reviews — there's a couple of places (Excalibur Hobbies, for instance) I hadn't actually heard of and will have to try out. I should note that Pandemonium's mail address is now 36 JFK Street, though — the 8 JFK Street address is from before Tyler moved to his current location, "the Garage".

I had a chance to watch a complete game of the Next Generation trading card game, but wasn't too impressed. The joy of Magic is the weird interactions of cards and the endless ways of throwing monkey wrenches into your opponent's plans for world domination (*Illuminati: New World Order* is even better in this respect, by the way). The Trek game doesn't seem to have the same potential for interactivity — it seems to be just lay the mission cards, lay the dilemmas, then move your ships back and forth without doing very much to each other. Then again, it could have just been the way the relative neophytes were playing.

It seems to me that the most successful trading card games would be the ones that come closest to roleplaying — particularly the ones that allow the maximum flexibility in interaction with your opponent. Not only should the cards in your deck work together, but for real fun the design should allow the maximum of interaction with the cards in the opponent's deck. Otherwise, you might as well just play solitaire.

Peaceable Demeanors: I'm actually glad you reprinted this . . . I liked it the first time I saw it, and now I get to say so. <g>

Softly, Softly: Oh good, a fellow newbie! Welcome from one who's even newer, and do keep up the alternating commentary — I was highly entertained.

Strange Sands: I always have trouble with a GM's reading of text during an adventure, too — I was involved in a short Al-Qadim-variant adventure this fall, and even though I knew the GM was simply reading descriptive stuff he wrote so he wouldn't forget it, it jolted me right out of my suspension of disbelief. I can't imagine it working in any campaign that depends on the spoken word as the primary method of communication.

(I actually feel a little jolted when as a GM I just have to consult notes on a location or person. I'd love to hear any suggestions people may have as to minimizing this process, especially if the can be used by a GM with a less than perfect memory and a lot of clamoring players distracting him.)

Some Belated Thoughts on Resurrection

In general, I've never liked resurrection as a game mechanic. The primary reason for this is that I've never liked killing characters, either — I find it dull and pointless, actually (killing a PC is easy. Creating horrible, seemingly insurmountable dilemmas for them . . . now that's a challenge for all concerned). Hence there's been no need for resurrection — the few occasions a character has died, it's because the player or character needed to be written out or because the character truly **deserved** to die, and I didn't want it back.

There's one big exception to this, though. Last summer, I kicked off a campaign by killing and then resurrecting **everyone**. And it wasn't even *GURPS Riverworld*.

The campaign was set in the Lantern Kingdom, a low-magic fantasy nation loosely based on Ellen Kushner's excellent novel *Swordspoint*. The world was populated by humans — there had been Elves a thousand years ago, but the two expanding races had collided and nearly destroyed each other in a terrible war — a war that ended when the remaining Elves were routed at the battle of Muyer's Spur . . . and literally vanished into the nearby forests. As the campaign opened, the characters were members and escorts of a small caravan journeying between cities near Muyer's Spur. They were immediately ambushed by bandits and killed.

Then they woke up. It was three months later. The PC's were alone, the sole "survivors" of the ambush, left in the same place with the now rotting wrecks of the caravan's wagons. They were whole, unharmed, even old scars had disappeared. They also were completely bereft of equipment, except for the white robes on their bodies, and days from any civilization.

As a device to kick off the campaign, I think the resurrection idea worked very well. It served to initially unify some very different PC's while putting them in a very desperate situation. They had nothing, and as a result, had to work hard just to stay alive in the first few sessions (there was some wondering if they would be resurrected if they died again — I snickered and told them they were welcome to try it, and oddly enough got no takers. Which is good — they wouldn't have been). The resurrection also let me introduce some fundamental questions that I was looking forward to their exploring: Who brought them back? (not too hard to answer, given the background) Why? (the real question, actually, with some shocking answers) Were they **REALLY** the characters who had died three months before? On a more political bent, why did the bandit leader let the caravan's leader go, then kill everyone else? Etc., etc. . . .

Unfortunately, the campaign itself fell by the wayside well before any of these questions could be tackled. Some of the problem was interpersonal stuff only unrelated to the campaign content (though one guy did drop out sim-

ply because it wasn't D&D adventure as he was used to it — doughty fighters working together to stamp out monstrous evil. He wasn't missed . . .), but I think I did mishandle the resurrection element. The problem was in follow-up, I think — once the characters got themselves back to civilization and (by hook or by crook) ensured that they actually had some chance of getting regular food, clean clothes, etc., I steered the storyline towards developing the political plot threads I had in mind. The political threads were every bit as important as the resurrection thread in my plan for the campaign, and as the campaign developed, the political and resurrection plots would have interacted heavily with each other.

The problem is that the introduction of the political plot was yet another ball in the air competing for the players attention. I think the results were less focused than they could have been, and I think I ignored something that was discussed in many of IR's pages last issue: resurrection should be a Big Deal with major consequences. The way I structured it, the characters weren't even absolutely sure anything HAD happened, and by shifting the plot towards the back burner and picking up other threads, I further undercut its importance.

In a few months, I actually hope to tackle this campaign again, with a new audience. The ideas I want to mess with interest me too much not to give it another try. I think I'm going to make some changes though. One of the interesting surprises that developed out of the first attempt was that the characters who reacted most to the resurrection treated it as a religious experience (that's not surprising in itself, but I didn't plan for it to come up in the plot). They talked to a priest or two about it, and I started a subplot rolling about the "miracle" the characters had experienced — a subplot that gathered steam when the now-"blessed" characters had a couple of lucky breaks in public. I think next time I'm going to make that religious element the main plotline and start introducing the political angles (in which the Lantern Kingdom's official church is thoroughly involved in, of course) as part of that plotline. By exploring the consequences of the resurrection first and making politics the subplot, I think players will think they have a far better grasp of What's Really Going On.

They won't, of course . . . and before they know it that fact's going to rear up and bite them. <g>

Burnout

I'm tired of thinking about burnout. I don't want to talk about it. <g>

Seriously, a sort of burnout has in some ways been my biggest problem. It's not that I get tired of GMing per se, but plotting stories catches up with me after a while.

I bite off big ideas for campaign. I've just talked about the latest one I've tried to develop — in addition to the

central resurrection plotline, it also includes political intrigue (surrounding a dying king and a rebellious duke) that I hope to develop into an entire civil war, the eventual re-introduction of the Elves into the game world and the processes of "first contact" with them and healing the wounds of a thousand years ago. It's a big story that I'd like to explore over two or three years.

My first campaign took the *Traveller* Shattered Imperium and asked "What if God existed, and what if the Once and Future King Arthur returned NOW, as part of His plan?" I spent a full academic year setting up the PC's for revealing the first clause of that question, and while the resulting shock was eminently worth the setup time, when the next September rolled around and college restarted, I wanted to move on to something else. I never got to drop more than the barest hints about what was really going on with that charismatic Imperial Navy captain named Arctor. Sigh.

Similarly, I've been trying for years to run a superhero campaign long enough to get into the meat of what I really want to do with the superhero universe I created — namely to tell the story of a (PC-created, now NPC) Prince of Faerie who grows up and turns the world into his own personal domain. To do it right, Zachary Mather's (or Arctor's, above) story has to become part of the PC's stories — characters like these have to start as background figures and then grow to prominence in the story line. The PC's have their own stories to tell, and my ideal is to tell those stories, to develop the PC's and have them wind up at the point where they are the determining factors in the fate of the "central" character — the true center, in other words — and of the outcome of the overall story. It's probably an insane way of planning a campaign, but I'd like to pull it off, just once.

(Given my taste for these kinds of stories, you can see why I like *Babylon 5*, can't you? Gimme that five year story arc, Mr. Straczynski. I'll drool over every weekly installment, every scrap of information . . .)

The trouble is, I hit a point about 6 months or 9 months into these things, and either the real world catches up to me, or the munchkin player who somehow got into the campaign but I haven't booted because he's a pretty good roleplayer and there's only three players anyway brings things crashing down when I try to rein him in, or I come up with a new idea I want to tackle, or whatever. There's always an immediate reason, but (even if only because I'm kind of glad to be stopping either temporarily or permanently), there also seems to be a reason behind the immediate reason. I've generally passed the first major milestone (to my mind) in the campaign, the plotting feels a little bit lifeless to me, the players seem a little restless, and I feel like I'm looking down a long stretch of actual work (not fun) on the story at some distant goal glimmering in the haze. And suddenly I don't have a campaign any more.

I don't know what to do about this — what I do at present is put the notes away, let the story float to the back of my mind, and someday pick it up again or pull out themes

and characters and start building a new story from them. Maybe I'm just trying too hard at turning roleplaying into Art (I read that discussion in LR a few months ago with great interest). I **am** trying to tighten my focus and strengthen my weak points as a GM — I'm currently working up a convention one shot for (hopefully) next month that should be a very nice murder mystery. Six characters, four to six hours, beginning to end — you don't get much more focused than that, I think.

But I still want to get past that burnout point, and tell a **BIG** story someday. Maybe it is hubris, but — even if only just once — I want to see that triumphant point when three or five or ten years of plot threads are tied up in a bow, when little hints dropped in the first and seventh and twelfth sessions are remembered and put together and someone says "Oh my god! He had this planned from the start!", when good defeats evil and everybody gets married and lives happily ever after. Just once, please.

And then I'll start a new story.

Well, maybe **after** a few months' rest.

The Space-Crime Continuum Wants YOU!

Or at least your ideas.

I mentioned at the top of this that I'm self-employed. What I'm self-employed at (as will be my wife, who's wrapping up her current job this week) is the launching of a science fiction and mystery bookstore in Northampton. It's called The Space-Crime Continuum, and it will be opening in June 1995.

Our goal is to be the best source of SF, mysteries and games in the Pioneer Valley. We'll have over 9000 books, about \$10,000 inventory in roleplaying/board/trading card games. We also plan to have fun stuff like a gaming room, comfy couches for browsing, great service, information and ordering via the Internet, author signings and tournaments and charity drives. And we're looking for any idea, recommendation or cautionary story anyone cares to tell us.

So: as buyers of games and books and other stuff, what do you find attractive in a store like this? How do you tend to notice this kind of store, and what makes you decide to go in and shop? Do you have any horror stories — things stores did to you or around you that you'd highly recommend we avoid? What's the neatest thing you've ever seen an store like this do, and would you recommend we try to reproduce it? What games do you recommend we carry, what do you consider absolutely essential to a decent game store, and what do you consider dreck that's not worth the shelf space?

Any and all opinions would be welcomed — while Deb and I have plenty of business experience, very little of that is retail, and while we love the genres and games we're going to be selling, we're very aware that our viewpoint on

what's great (Tim Powers) and what stinks (Piers Anthony) <g> is not everyone's viewpoint. The more people we hear ideas and preferences from, the more of a "feel of the room" we can get and base our decisions on.

Whew. I think that's entirely enough for one issue written very late at night. Be seeing you . . .

Colophon

"The Parliament of Dreams" #1 is copyright 1995 by Chris Aylott. All opinions are my own, but you're welcome to share them. I'm generous that way. This zine is assembled on a IBM 386 25MhZ with MSWORKS 3.0 and Pagemaker 5.0. The format of the zine is shamelessly ripped from the zine I write for *The Babylon Project*, which is pretty shamelessly ripped from/based on various zines I've seen here. What goes around, comes around. I may modify this zine's format next issue to give it identity separate from my other zine, but then again, I may not. Printing was done on a slightly cranky Royal inkjet computer affectionately named "#(%&*#%(*&!!!"

Artwork? Believe me, you're better off not seeing my attempts at artwork. Have a nice day.

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Softly, softly

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Moria is a game the kids play a lot on the downstairs pc. It must have been available on university networked computers for quite a while, but the first time I heard about it was when it was played at a top-secret government building in lunch hours, at the end of which a message would appear on the screen The Gates of Moria are closing and everyone would go back to work. Somehow, Steve got a version for our downstairs computer, at which point Tara almost (but not quite) lost interest in reading entirely. <Tara here: My favourite character is a half troll which is mega strong, through Rob goes more for a half orc - it's got a wider social class range. Personally I like my characters to be rich and it's better if they're male, as they tend to have more hit points. And it shows I'm not scared of playing a character of a different sex. My most recent half troll, Elam Llortflah (that's half troll backwards, in case you didn't get it) got killed.

Lots of things can kill your character. There's the balrog > [Jenny here: once when Tara was particularly naughty, Steve took Moria off the computer and so when Tara pressed the appropriate buttons, a message came up on the screen "Moria has been removed from your grasp until your behaviour improves. By Order of the Balrog". Tara's face was a study: but she quickly realised, from the stifled giggles of two parents, that she had been had. It took six months, for reasons apart from her behaviour, before Moria was put back that time ... I think she also gave up Moria for Lent once too.] <As I was saying, and you know, of course, that it's Tara back again: there's giant white and giant black lice which breed like rabbits and there's dragons, but I don't like killing them and I can only get them in wizard mode and Mum doesn't like me doing that (only 'cos Dad said I wasn't to cheat with wizard mode). I don't like the squint-eyed rogue, but it tends to keep out of my way. It goes more for Rob, who did manage to kill him once. Normally, though, the rogue steals Rob's money, steals his food and his equipment, then uses it against him.

I go for plunder, as much as I can -- gold, potions, scrolls, wands, weapon and armour, spells, prayer books and chests. You have to be careful when opening chests -- Rob once tried and out came twenty lice. I think Elam Llortflah maybe got killed opening a chest. I don't remember how he got killed, but it was a horrible moment. Rob says he remembers the first time he tried to kill the squint eyed rogue it just killed him with one blow and when he looked in the list of the top 50 players, he found he was number 50, the lowest, weakest and bottomest. It was not a good thing to find out. >

Currently -- due to Steve buying me a video as an unexpected Christmas present -- we can either watch the tv or play Moria. This means that people playing Moria have no distractions apart from an irritable Mum in the background who a) can't watch her favourite tv programme b) has to write her Interregnum piece by hand -- one of the slowest and most barbaric ways of doing so. There's another computer which I could use. It's upstairs in a cold bedroom and the machine belongs to Steve, so I don't use it much. I prefer my computer down in the living room, loaded with a word processing package I'm comfortable with, with a nice interior modem so I can do a bit of Net trampolining and a warm fire in the background.

Messages on the Internet pile up quicker than I'm really happy with -- I'm gradually unsubscribing the news groups which pile up five hundred messages in the five minutes before I wearily stop deleting all unread messages and start again. This mostly includes the Star Trek messages -- it's physically painful to log on and be faced with the doleful news that there are 100,000 unread messages. This is probably a good cue to do a book review:

MagicNet (John deChancie AvoNova 1994 \$4.99 pb)

It would be extremely difficult to be less than disparaging about this book. *The Library Journal* describes it as "surrealistic prose with fast-paced action to create a whirlwind tale of technohorror"; I'd be a little more pragmatic and wonder if the author can spell the words "science" or "technology": since he obviously can't understand them.

But, to start at the beginning, once upon a time, there was an American assistant professor of English called Schuyler King, who had his life under control and is even used to people making pathetic puns on his name. He is happily settling down to read Keats' "The Fall of Hyperion" when a friend telephones. In the middle of the telephone call, in the middle of Grant's guarded comments about sending a package which should not be opened if he is not harmed, he is killed. By a demon. ("He" here, refers to Grant: naturally).

Professor King -- who is about as computer phobic as it is possible to be without being an azure marigold -- finds that he is unwillingly cast in the rôle of ... he is not quite sure what. With the sharp edge of intellect that only long academic training can give, he rapidly adapts to a situation which keeps changing and he finds himself on an electronically technological quest with an extremely attractive lady. Who is gay, so it's hand's off, guys, until she wants to put them on, in which case she does a bit

of role changing and becomes bisexual, willing, assertive and just a little bit predatory (the professor does not complain).

The saving grace of this book is that having accidentally broken about every scientific and logical law possible, the author avoids a *deus ex machina* shimmering of time to put Professor King back in his study with Keats. Either the author or, I suspect, the editor, realised that getting this particular genie back in the bottle was outwith the bounds of the author's ability unless (I hope not) he was prepared to embark on *MagicNet 2*.

Tara asked me to explain a bit about Magda. She has a very dear friend called Clive Grace who used to appear on alt.callahans under the name of Tanais and write stories of Tanais the fox and his friend Magda the wolf. She was one of his very earliest non-Net fans and he sent her a laser printed copy of his stories. It was a tragedy when they slipped between her bed and the wall -- she has a "captain" type bed, an all in one thing where the bed is five feet above the ground on top of the desk, drawers and wardrobe. Steve -- who is excellent in emergencies -- crawled under the bed and did a mighty press-up to enable us to pull out that precious package. It does get a bit confusing, as Tara also has two imaginary friends, Tanais and Magda, who snuggle up with her at night (a fox and a wolf, what else?) and when Steve went north, he gave her a fox soft toy ready cut out to make up, which she hasn't yet, as she's scared of not doing it right. Also she and Rob have two fox soft toys, Russet (Tara's) and Rufus (Rob's). I have just brought her two vaguely wolf looking slippers, one of which is called Akela (she likes *The Jungle Books*) and I've forgotten the other one. So here, now, is another book review, one which Tara read first and recommended to me, and to you too:

Brother to Dragons, Companion to Owls (Jane Lindskold, AvoNova 1994 \$4.99 pb)

The scene opens on a well-structured institution where there are weekly baths for the ambulatory residents and it focuses on a young girl, Sarah, who is cuddled up to a two-headed dragon. Two things quickly become obvious: Sarah only speaks in quotations, which can get extremely irritating, and not only does her toy communicate with her, but each head has a different personality.

Sarah has been diagnosed as autistic, but the institution is short of money and so the beautiful Dr Haas "encourages" her into the community. Luckily, she is "adopted" by the street-wise Abalone, who introduces her to a lair for drop-outs, run by a modern Fagin called Head Wolf. This "jungle", based on Rudyard Kipling's stories of Mowgli, is a sanctuary to which all members of the community contribute.

When Sarah starts reaching back in her childhood memories, past the regular abuse of visiting psychologists, she remembers two siblings and the focus of the novel shifts from her own self-development to a search for Dylan and Eleanora, just as the focus from the outside world shifts from leaving Sarah abandoned in an uncaring community to a frantic search to find, capture and use her. The two strands of the plot reach towards each other, blend and intertwine towards an explosive climax where Sarah reaches out to take control of her own life.

Roger Zelazny described author Jane Lindskold as "one of the brightest new writers to come along in years". This might prove a little optimistic -- especially as there are distinct echoes of Megan Lindholm's *Wizard of the Pigeons*. This book is very obviously a first work, with the usual weaknesses of construction: there's lots of episodes which don't link too smoothly together and the character of ex-child actress computer whizz Abalone is too perfect. Against that, though, is the smooth, almost addictive writing style which describes a future, rather frightening, America. I enjoyed reading this book a lot.

So that's it for now. I leave you with a word picture of Tara and I on reading:

I read *Midnight's Children* several Christmases ago, at one of those family gatherings where a random assortment of relatives are plunked down in a mansion situated in the middle of nowhere (well, Kinross-shire to be exact). The in-laws were coo-ing over the children, Steve was doing something else (playing billiards without the rules he says), I absent-mindedly wandered over to the bookshelves, skimmed past the sociological texts and snagged my finger on the cover of *Midnight's Children*. I knew about Salman Rushdie, of course, even though this was before the *fatwah*. It was thick, I hesitated. I read very quickly, though my comprehension rate is ~~normal~~ low. the cover was a study of blues and greens. Before I could come to my senses, I found myself flicking over the title pages, glanced over the first page (close type, long paragraphs, narrow margins). Before I knew where I was, I was on page 51, breathless with an addictive excitement, reluctant to stop reading for meals, reading until Steve (at first amused, then irritated) made pointed hints about sleep.

The person who owned the house (and *Midnight's Children*) later gave Tara a copy of *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. She behaved in exactly the same way -- her reading speed is almost as high as mine, though her comprehension rate is far higher -- and when she'd read the book a few times, she relegated it to the ranks of her favourites, the books which are permitted into bed with her. She sleeps, perched on and surrounded by books, like a dragon.

Tales from the Electric Underground

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TALES FROM THE ANGEL'S BRIGADE

--PROLOGUE--

Cyberspace is a funny form of reality--it exists, but it isn't tangible. Kinda' like the imaginary friend you had when you were four.

I sprinted across the artificial landscape, praying that my fake process ID would hold. Cracking the ICE was no problem--I was more concerned about what the users could do to me than I was about the ICE.

My electric persona raised its hand. With only a thought, I made *it* appear. Flickering and sputtering with a vengeance of its own, the virus resembled ball lightning more than it did its living counterpart. Naturally, my 'deck was immune--Fizzig and I had made sure of that. The question remained though, were *they* immune?

I looked up to see the deep red form of an Inquisitor making its way toward me. A metallic voice boomed in my head. <<Identify yourself!>>

Ducking into an alley between a database and a cache of resource files, I tried to hide the virus in my hand. It was too late, though. Attracted by the glimmer of the virus, the Inquisitor began to hasten its pace.

In a fit of panic, I did the only thing I could think of.

I threw the virus at the Inquisitor.

The virus embraced the Inquisitor. Sickly yellow rivulets of electric death played across its armored form as the virus went about its work. The Inquisitor quickly imploded with an electric pop, and then I knew it was time to get out.

A quick shift of directories and I was at the root. Alerted by the Inquisitor's "death", the ICE swarmed around me, trying to keep me from logging off. Gunmetal gray wasps the size of my hand darted around me, but their flight was cut short. The wasps froze in mid-air and each one died with a metallic pop, revealing more viruses. Fizzig's baby wasn't only effective, it was fast. A quick jump and it was over—I was out.

The world returned in a roar as my 'deck unplugged my senses. Reacting to the shock of the transition, my hands and face twitched slightly and I took a deep, jerky breath. Immediately, I was aware of Fizzig crouching down to examine my 'deck's medicomp. I could barely hear his voice.

"He's spiking really bad, Tanith," I heard him groan.

I shook off the initial shock of returning to the real world and opened my eyes a bit. Mist hid almost everything, but I could barely make out Tanith's hand waving in front of my face.

I heard Tanith tap on the medicomp screen. "So what's your point?"

The night air bit my hands and face and I reveled in the sensation for a brief moment.

Fizzig's concerned hippie face danced in front of me. "My point? Nobody's been in a New Papacy node on a run for this long and lived to tell about it. If the ICE didn't get him, an Inquisitor probably did."

Now I could see everything, but where were the colors? An alarm hooted in the distance.

Tanith shifted her stance and I heard a high-pitched buzz as she charged her gauss pistol. "Fizzig—pull Kramer's plug and carry him on your cycle. I'll cover you."

As Fizzig reached down to pull my jack out, I came to and announced it to both of them. "No time for that, chum," I yammered, "let's scratch gravel!" Popping my jack, I grabbed my 'deck and scrambled for my Harley.

We sped through the maze of streets and alleys, our bikes screaming in the night air.

Fizzig's voice crackled eagerly through my headset. "I take it that our new 'friend' is a big hit with Quasimodo and crew?"

"No time for funny stuff," I cautioned, "the God Squad will be here in no time."

"So in other words, we're screwed as usual."

"Cool your jets, Fizzig," Tanith piped, "where are they and how many?"

I glanced at the heads-up display on my visor. Five angry, red blips stood in our way. "Trouble times five straight ahead."

Teflon rounds whizzed past us as Tanith took aim. "Heads up, guys! Either they're getting smarter or the Theos are feedin' 'em neuroprine."

Singling out my target, I cut loose with the small chain gun on the side of my Harley. It chattered, sending rounds pinging off the windshell of the lead Inquisitor's motorcycle. The Inquisitors broke their spearhead formation, trying to encircle us. We didn't stop. Tanith roared ahead and fired a gauss round into an Inquisitor's faceplate as she met him. The round flung the man off his cycle like a rag doll, shattering his helmet's faceplate, staining his black armor with a fine red mist.

As the Inquisitors regrouped for another run, Fizzig and I pulled out our tanglers and drew a bead on the lead Inquisitor. I glanced over at Fizzig and a maniacal grin danced across his face. Firing in sync, we roped the Inquisitor and dismounted him ungracefully. I never knew their armor made such pretty sparks on the pavement. With a nod, Fizzig and I split up, cutting the Inquisitor loose from our tanglers. He slid headfirst on his back for what seemed an eternity and I looked back just in time to see him slide into the motorcycle of another, derailing its rider in a ball of flame and debris. As we regrouped, the remaining two opened up with their street sweepers again, trying to shoot our bikes out from under us. I felt a round slam into my lower back, but my body armor held, leaving me a bruise to show from my escape. Spinning my bike around, I bore down on the offending Inquisitor, a malicious grin gracing my face. At the last minute, I swerved to the left, extended my right arm and clotheslined the bastard. Seeing his comrade defeated so brutally, the last Inquisitor decided to get suicidal. He never got close to me or my bike. Swerving slightly, I aimed low and took out his front tire with a burst from the chain gun. The Inquisitor and his bike slid by me in a cloud of sparks and smoke before they came to a screeching halt in the middle of the street.

Another battle won, and the war was just beginning. . .

REVIEWS

PRODUCT: Topps Star Wars Galaxy cards, Series Two

ARTISTS: Ralph McQuarrie et. al.

PRICE: \$1.25/pack (8 cards/pack), \$50.00/box

SET SIZE: 135 cards, 6 etched foil chaser cards

This is the first time I've ever tried reviewing collector cards, but I liked this set so much that I decided to give it a whack. Series 2 is a 140-card continuation of Topps's series one set (released in 1993) and continues and broadens the horizons of the art of Star Wars. Cards 142 through 148 feature artwork from the portfolio of Ralph McQuarrie, an artist famous for his artwork representing scenes from the movies. Cards 149 through 165 gives the collector a look at the comic art of Star Wars, ranging from artwork which appeared in the Marvel comic book series to the work of Dave Dorman, which graced the covers of Dark Horse Comics's *Dark Empire* and *Tales of the Jedi* miniseries. Cards 166 through 177 feature illustrations drawn by various artists, including a painting of R2-D2 and C-3PO by Boris Vallejo and a quick self-portrait by the late Sir Alec Guinness. Cards 178 through 195 consist of production and poster art of various main and bit characters ranging from aliens to various movie posters both from the U.S. and foreign countries. Cards 196 to 204 give us a look at the merchandising art of Star Wars, which includes artwork which appeared on the boxes for Kenner's Star Wars toys and graced the covers of the Han Solo and Lando Calrissian novels. Cards 205 to 274 comprise the largest and best part of the entire set--the "new visions." In the new visions subset, artists are commissioned to present their own pieces of Star Wars artwork ranging from bit characters, such as Salacious Crumb and the Ugnaughts, to new visions of the heroes.

Below is a list of some of my favorite cards from the entire set.

Cards 146--The Entertainment Center in Imperial City (The McQuarrie Portfolio): I never knew that Lucas had originally planned to do scenes in the Imperial City. This card exceeds my expectations as to what kind of sights might be seen in the Empire's capital. The scene shows several open-air casinos or restaurants in the center of a large square at night.

Card 147--The Imperial Palace (The McQuarrie Portfolio): Another piece of art for the unshot scenes, this one shows Vader and a companion (Luke?) entering the Emperor's cathedral-like palace on Coruscant. This was one of several cards in the set which made me say "Wow!"

Cards 159-165--Dave Dorman's artwork (The Comic Art of Star Wars): Dave Dorman has done consistently outstanding work on the covers for Dark Horse Comics' Star Wars miniseries. These cards feature his artwork without the mastheads (titles) of the books. My only gripe is that they printed a card in series one featuring the cover to *Dark Empire* #4 with the masthead instead of making the subset complete in series two.

Card 207--Thom Ang (New Visions 2): This card features a very striking piece of artwork by Thom Ang. Like card 147, this is definitely a "Wow!" card, in my opinion. In this piece, Vader becomes the Emperor's "right-hand man" in a scene reminiscent of a knighting. I was so awestruck by this card I wrote a poem about it entitled "Ang's Vader" for my creative writing class. If anyone is interested, I'll be more than happy to print it in my next issue.

Card 208--Sergio Aragones (New Visions 2): Many people know Sergio as one of the various artists for *MAD Magazine* and the creator of *Groo the Wanderer*. Sergio's piece is especially humorous. In his own satirical form, Sergio gives us a piece of C-3PO's mind as he trudges through the deserts of Tatooine.

Card 221--Colleen Doran (New Visions 2): In the Marvel version of the post-Return of the Jedi universe, a new dark lord, Lumiya, rises from the ashes to threaten the Alliance and rebuild the Imperial war machine. Doran's work has been featured in such comic books as *Sandman*, *Amazing Spider-Man*, and *X-Factor*.

Card 224--Hugh Fleming (New Visions 2): Fleming gives us an excellent painting of a young Ben Kenobi as he might appear in the next three Star Wars movies. Fleming even gives his opinion on who should play the young Jedi. Let's hope Lucas takes his advice. ; -)

Card 259--Jason Pearson (New Visions 2): Pearson's piece is another one which I find extremely interesting--it shows Han burning his Imperial draft card as Chewbacca looks on.

My only gripe about this series is the way subsets are denoted. Each card has a piece of a scene from the movies on one edge with each subset having its own special edge marking. For example, cards in The McQuarrie Portfolio have part of the background from the reactor shaft run in "Return of the Jedi." This gives the unfortunate effect of a miscut (a card which has part of the artwork or picture from another card on it due to an improperly aligned cutter), which really threw me for a loop. However, as a whole, this set is a treat for the eyes, especially the new vision section. Some of this artwork I have seen before in the comic and RPG books, but other pieces, such as some of the foreign movie posters were completely new to me. I found this set to be a breath of fresh air compared to the first series of which I tried (and failed) to complete a set. If you can find a dealer that has a complete set or has a full box (a rarity), I heartily recommend these cards.

In closing, I would like to extend my thanks to the proprietors of Majestic Comics and Coins, Cordell and Cornelius Wabeke, for helping me complete my set.

PRODUCT: *Tales of the Jedi: The Freedom Nadd Uprising* #2 of 2 (September '94)

PUBLISHER: Dark horse Comics

WRITER(S): Tom Veitch

ARTIST: Tony Akins and Denis Rodier

PRICE: \$2.50 US (\$3.50 Canadian)

PAGE COUNT: 24

WARNING: Fans who have not read *Tales of the Jedi* or the first issue of *Freedom Nadd* should do so before reading this review. This review contains spoilers from the second issue of *Tales of the Jedi: The Freedom Nadd Uprising*.

After reading and reviewing the first issue of this two-issue linking series I anxiously waited for the second issue, hoping that the art and writing would improve. Unfortunately, all I received was a good dose of disappointment. The story starts on Onderon, just as Republic troops are landing and Satal and Aleema Keto crash-land in the planet's war-torn capital. The scene quickly shifts to the fighting between the Naddists and Republic regulars led by a group of five Jedi--Shoaneb Culu, Kith Kark, Dace Diath, Qrrrl Toq, and Nomi Sunrider. The pall of the Dark Side weighs heavily on the young Jedi, but they quickly take the city with the help of the Qel-Droma brothers and a group of Modon Kira's warriors. As Jedi and Republic forces press the attack, Nomi is attacked through the Force by an unknown assailant, an assailant who is later revealed to be King Ommin. The scene then shifts back to Satal and Aleema who are now meeting with King Ommin in a hidden series of catacombs. Ommin graciously offers to translate the Sith tome the young Tetans have stolen while gloating over his newest "trophy"--Master Arca.

As Arca and Ommin fight a war of wills, Nomi, the Qel-Droma brothers and several other Jedi Knights battle their way through the catacombs to save Arca from Ommin's wrath. In a rather short-lived battle they confront Ommin and free Arca. During the fighting, Satal and Aleema Keto make their escape, taking with them the Sith tome and a pair of swords given to them by the spirit of Freedon Nadd. Seeing that his work lies with the Krath and not Ommin and the Naddists, Freedon Nadd's ghost then takes Ommin's soul with him back to the Dark Side. In the end, the remains of King Ommin and Queen Amanoa and Freedon Nadd are buried on Onderon's moon, Dxun.

Like the first issue, my main gripes are the artwork and the writing. Again the reader is faced by corny lines, such as this dialogue between Aleema and Satal Keto as they crash-land in the middle of Iziz:

SATAL: "The yacht's hit, Aleema! We're going to die!"

ALEEMA: "Don't be stupid, Satal! Keep the helm steady! We are going to live!"

Eeeeyuck! Veitch also continues to voice the idea that the Dark Side is magic, mostly in the action of the story rather than the dialogue or narration. His narration seems to be redundant at times, voicing the obvious when the artwork could speak louder than any narration. Although the cover was graced by another Dave Dorman painting, the internal art was absolutely terrible. None of the heroes were very recognizable when compared to their appearances in the first *Tales of the Jedi* series and the artist either forgot or doesn't understand the concept that lightsabers can be different colors as shown in Dorman's cover art. In short, I think Dark Horse made a big mistake in cramming this storyline into two books and changing artists. Veitch's writing lacks the quality of the first *Tales of the Jedi* series, something which may be the fault of the brevity of the series. If you can find someone who can explain the entire situation and how *Tales of the Jedi* and *Tales of the Jedi Dark Lords of the Sith* are connected, great--save your \$5.00 and avoid both issues of *Freedon Nadd*. If not, then I would recommend buying *Freedon Nadd* strictly for informational purposes.

PRODUCT: *Tales of the Jedi: Dark Lords of the Sith* #1-3 (October-December '94)

PUBLISHER: Dark horse Comics

WRITER(S): Tom Veitch

ARTIST: Chris Gossett and Mike Barreiro

PRICE: \$2.50 US (\$3.50 Canadian)

PAGE COUNT: 25-28

Issue #1:

When I first picked up *Dark Lords* #1, I was skeptical, especially because of the poor quality of *Freedon Nadd*. However, my fears dispersed when I read the first issue. *Dark Lords* #1 begins with the retelling of the story of Naga Sadow, a member of the Sith on the run from Republic forces. The scene shifts after a few pages to reveal that the story is being retold by a Jedi holocron, an interactive holographic teacher/history book the size of a very small music box. Exar Kun, a student of Jedi Master Vodo-Siosk Baas is introduced to the storyline, as are Crado and Sylvar, a pair of Cathar (feline

humanoid) Jedi. Kun's deep interest in Dark Side lore causes Baas to feel a great deal of concern for his student—a concern which later turns into a great deal of pain and sadness. The reader is then whisked away from the grasslands of Dantooine to the Empress Teta system and one of the orbiting Keto carbonite factories. Aleema and Satal Keto and several of their friends arrive at the factory, interrupting an inspection by Satal's parents. Satal and Aleema are quick to show off their new-found power, arousing the suspicions of the factory supervisor, who is rendered harmless by a Force illusion created by Aleema. Lord Keto orders his guards to take Satal and Aleema and their friends into custody, but Aleema quickly renders the guards defunct with some rather convincing illusions. The young Krath continue with their coup, murdering Lord Keto, his wife and their advisors. Not even their old tutor, Korus, is spared from their wrath.

The story then turns to Onderon, where Master Arca, the Qel-Droma brothers and Nomi Sunrider discuss the events in the Empress Teta system and the next course of action in fighting the Dark Side. As Ulic Qel-Droma assists in the building of the new Jedi outpost on Onderon, he is confronted by the spirit of Freedon Nadd, who brings him a frightening prophecy. Returning to Dantooine, we find Master Baas' students in the middle of lightsaber practice. Exar Kun first takes on and soundly defeats Crado in a short lived duel—a duel throughout which Kun arrogantly flaunts his skills. After Crado's defeat, Baas orders Sylvar to test her skill "against this swordsman who thinks so highly of himself..." Sylvar readily obeys, but at Kun's first insult, she gives into anger and claws him, scarring his face. Although Sylvar's anger burns bright, Kun's anger burns brighter and longer. His ego wounded, Exar Kun orders the Cathar to take up her weapon and fight him as a Jedi, but she refuses to appease his arrogance and instead insults him further. Driven to greater heights of anger, Kun moves to strike Sylvar, but Master Baas intervenes, reprimanding him. Out of arrogance, Kun challenges his teacher to a test of skills, and student and master engage in a fantastic duel, lightsaber against wooden staff. Just when it looks as though Baas has bested his student and made his point, Kun calls upon the Force and grabs a second lightsaber, striking out at Master Baas with renewed energy and besting him in the end.

Issue #1 truly restored my faith in the *Tales of the Jedi* series. Veitch's writing has the quality of the first mini-series with the exception of one or two redundant narration boxes. The dialogue, especially between Master Baas and Exar Kun, is well done and fits the setting unlike the corny dialogues found in *Freedon Nadd*. The artwork is stunning and the layout is original, but sometimes a little confusing. Hugh Fleming's cover art is very good, but he can't capture the faces of the main characters as well as Dave Dorman. However, my main gripe in this issue is with the Krath. Although the first half of their political coup was well-written, the latter half, which showed the young Tetans bragging and joking about their "victories," was overdone. In fact, it reeked of "The Addams Family." The macabre-ness of this part, especially the in-jokes, undermined their sinister intentions instead of intensifying my hatred for them as villains. My only other gripe is Veitch's continual referral to the Dark Side as "magic." In order to keep myself from beating a dead horse, let me just say that Veitch's references to the Dark Side as "magic" or "Sith magic" is something which raises my hackles in every *Dark Lords* issue reviewed here. This constant misappropriation of the term twists the way the Force is viewed in the Star Wars universe and detracts from the feel of the series.

Issue #2:

The second issue of *Dark Lords* begins on Onderon with Cay Qel-Droma and Tott Doneeta supervising the excavation of Freedon Nadd's ship and its conversion into the new Jedi outpost. Exar Kun arrives shortly, posing as a Jedi archaeologist in an attempt to gain access to the Dark Side artifacts found in Iziz. Master Arca quickly sees through Kun's ruse, but instead of leaving Onderon, Kun heads for Iziz. The story then shifts to the Empress Teta system where things are going from bad to worse. Having successfully staged a political coup, the Krath have begun invading the other worlds within the Empress Teta system, bringing each one within their iron grip. As the Krath warriors land, Aleema meditates upon the battle, rendering the Tetan defenders useless with illusions. However, the Krath invasion is cut short by a joint Republic and Jedi Knight strike force. Turning her illusions against the fleet, Aleema creates an illusory attacker to throw the Republic/Jedi fleet into chaos, but it isn't enough to keep Nomi Sunrider from discovering who is behind the attack. Quickly switching back to Onderon, we see Exar Kun in the streets of Iziz. Through the Force, Kun is drawn to a plaza where

two Naddists are proclaiming their beliefs. Just as the crowd is about to turn ugly, Kun intervenes and employs the Naddists in his search for Dark Side relics. The Naddists guide him to Nadd's tomb on the Dxun moon. Once there, Kun defeats the guardian beast and cuts his way into the tomb with his lightsaber. As Kun enters the tomb, he is confronted by the spirit of Freedon Nadd, who leads him farther along the path of the Dark Side by giving him two ancient scrolls. Jealous of the power they believe Kun now has, the two Naddists attempt to double cross Exar Kun and order him to give them the scrolls at blasterpoint. Blinded by anger and fear, Kun lashes out with his lightsaber, killing both of the Naddists and flees the Dxun moon with the scrolls.

The story then returns to the Krath invasion. Having seen through Aleema's illusions, the Republic/Jedi strike force moves in to pound the Krath battlestation into submission, only to face several squadrons of kamikaze fighters. Nomi quickly sees through this attack as well and tangles with Aleema through the Force, destroying her illusory fighters, but not before the *real* fighters slam into the fleet's command ship. One of the suicide ships hits the bridge of the command ship, injuring Ulic and forcing the fleet captain to call a retreat. The story then returns to show Exar Kun translating the scrolls while en-route to Korriban, the final resting place of the Sith.

In general, issue #2 was a good read, but like any book, it isn't perfect. At least one of the transitions from the Krath invasion back to Onderon was poorly done. Even though Star Wars is action-oriented, I felt that Veitch could have drawn the battle out a bit longer--everything was handled too quickly, unlike the final battle for Iziz in *Tales of the Jedi*. The artwork in the book was well done, and Fleming's cover art was very good, but it still didn't really capture the feel of the story as well as Dorman's artwork.

Issue #3:

The Jedi Knights have assembled on Deneba to discuss how to handle the threat of the Krath and the dark powers they wield. Among those assembled are the Qel-Droma brothers, Shoaneb Culu, Tott Doneeta, Nomi Sunrider, Dace Diath, Qrrrl Toq, and Masters Arca and Thon. As the assembly is called to order, the Jedi discuss the recent developments and their experiences fighting the Krath. The story quickly switches to Korriban, where Exar Kun continues his search for Sith lore. Journeying into the tombs of the Sith, Kun is attacked by the corpses of dead tomb robbers animated by the Dark Side. Although the undead guardians are no match for Exar Kun, the Dark Side continues its attack, sealing Kun in one of the tombs with a cave-in. The storyline then returns to Deneba and the Jedi assembly. Ulic Qel-Droma voices his opinion to a reluctant assembly, proposing that he infiltrate the Krath in an attempt to destroy them from the inside. Immediately, his fellow Jedi are opposed to the plan and try to sway him from it.

The story abruptly shifts back to Korriban, where Kun, guided by the spirit of Freedon Nadd, has found the main tomb of the Sith lords. Nadd shows him a crystal containing the souls of Jedi Masters who opposed the Dark Side and lost. To motivate Kun in his pursuit of the Dark Side, Nadd triggers a cave-in, destroying the crystal and the souls it contains and injuring the young Jedi in the process. Out of anguish and physical pain, Exar Kun calls out to Master Baas through the Force. Baas hears his student's cry for help, but is unable to overcome the dark powers surrounding him to give aid. Blocked from his master, a dying Exar Kun turns to the Dark Side for healing as Freedon Nadd's spirit taunts him. As the Dark Side closes around him, his scream echoes through the Force, touching not only Master Baas, but other Jedi, such as Ulic Qel-Droma and Master Arca. At that precise moment, a Krath ship hidden in the Jedi/Republic fleet sends a wave of war droids to the surface of Deneba in escape pods while assassin droids disguised as servant droids reveal their true colors to the assembled Jedi Knights. The Jedi show no mercy, but many fall to the war droids. As his fellow Jedi Knights fight a desperate battle, Exar Kun learns the lore of the Sith from Freedon Nadd. To test Kun's worthiness, Nadd disarms Exar Kun and leaves him at the mercy of the tomb's beastly guardians. At first Kun is confused and afraid, but, reacting in anger, he taps into the Dark Side and passes Nadd's test. The story briefly returns to Deneba and the aftermath of the battle. As Ulic mourns the loss of a dear friend, he vows to destroy the Krath from within. Nomi pleads with him not to pursue such a vow, but Ulic remains convinced that his way is the only way.

For a story, issue #3 was one of the best issues I've read in this series, but the transitions between Exar Kun on Korriban and the Jedi assembly on Deneba were numerous and rather abrupt, something which detracted from my enjoyment of the book. The number of transitions made the story move a bit too quickly. More importantly, some of the transitions were poorly written. It seemed as though Veitch simply placed the transitions without thinking instead of finding dramatically appropriate places for them. Hopefully he will slow things down just a wee bit and improve on his transitions in the next issues. I also found the Dark Side reanimating the corpses of dead tomb robbers to be too close to D&D, although it was an interesting concept. Like the past two issues, the internal artwork is great and the layout is very nice. This is the first issue on which Hugh Fleming's cover art truly fits the story.

As a series, I find *Dark Lords* to be good and I recommend it to anyone interested in the Jedi Knights or Star Wars in general, with the exception of relatively new fans. For those who have just recently been introduced to Star Wars, I recommend reading the trade paperbacks covering the movies, followed up by the *Dark Empire* trade paperback and then the *Tales of the Jedi* trade paperback.

PRODUCT: "BattleTech Compendium: The Rules of Warfare"

AUTHOR(S): Jordan K. Weisman et.al.

SYSTEM: BattleTech, 3rd edition

STOCK NUMBER: (FAS)1690

PRICE: \$20.00

PAGE COUNT: 152, hardcover

I'm going to be up front about this—I haven't read this book in depth yet, so this is going to be a very short and very general review. I do plan to write a more in depth review once I have played using the new rules, but for now, here are my observations of the new edition of the *Compendium*.

In general, the book is composed entirely of BattleTech and CityTech material--no BattleSpace or AeroTech specific material exists (unless you count the case rules for air support) in the entire book. Additional sidebars have been added to the text, giving information on the BattleTech universe in the form of battlefield accounts, interviews with 'mechwarriors and historians, and military and cultural information on the Clans. While this is all fine and good, I feel that some of the old historical information from the sidebars of the original BattleTech rulebook should have been given in order to give new players a sense of the game's "history" instead of jumping immediately to the Clan invasion. Most rules revisions are either small clarifications or massive overhauls, but the new compendium is a fence rider more or less. Most of the ambiguous bits have been cleaned up and all clarifications and revisions are denoted by a diamond-shaped bullet. However there are three very noticeable changes--revised combat resolution, rules for generic air support and the inclusion of a small technical readout.

Figuring the to-hit number has been made a bit easier and is a great improvement over the old system (which was almost as easy as pulling teeth) but makes it harder for a 'mechwarrior to hit targets. The following examples show what a difference the new system is.

Example 1 (second edition): A Warhammer is firing at a Crusader seven hexes away--medium range for a PPC (Particle Projector Cannon). The base to-hit number for medium range is 6. Now we figure in the modifiers. The Warhammer's heat level is at 13, giving the pilot a +2 penalty to-hit (4+2); the target 'mech moved four hexes during the movement phase while the Warhammer stood still, tacking on another +1 to the to-hit number (4+2+1) and the pilot's Gunnery skill is five, giving the pilot another +1 penalty and making the to-hit number eight (4+2+1+1). The attacking player rolls two six-sided dice and gets a nine--a hit. If the pilot had an "elite" rating (Gunnery skill of 2--a -2 bonus), the to-hit number would have been five (4+2+1-2).

Example 2 (third edition): Same attacker, target, range and weapon as in the first example. The base to-hit number is four (the value of the pilot's Gunnery skill). The target is at medium range (a +2 penalty), the attacker's heat level is 13 (another +2 penalty), and the target moved four hexes while the attacker stood still (+1), giving a to-hit number of nine (4+2+2+1). The player rolls an eight and misses. Had the pilot been rated as elite (with a Gunnery skill of 2), the difficulty number would have been seven (2+2+2+1).

As I mentioned before, the new edition of the *BattleTech Compendium* contains nothing for AeroTech or BattleSpace, but does cover air support in the special case rules. Fighters are classified as light, medium or heavy and each type can mount a certain amount of armor, weapons and bombs. At a first glance, the rules appear to be the same as those presented in AeroTech for attacking ground targets, but I have yet to do any kind of comparison between the two books in this area. This has been one area I have waited patiently for—at least now I won't have to run out and buy AeroTech or BattleSpace when I want to call in aerospace support.

The technical readout is a nice addition to the rulebook, and consists of four Inner Sphere 'mechs and four Clan 'mechs. Like its larger, \$15.00 counterparts, the *Compendium's* technical readout has its glitches which show up when the 'mechs are closely scrutinized or compared to their stats in the 3050 technical readout.

The most shocking change, however comes from FASA's recent classification of the rules. Gone are the days of "core" and "optional" rules. Instead, rules are designated as level one, two or three. Level one rules cover the basics--the BattleTech, third edition boxed set and all of the equipment in the 3025 and 3026 technical readouts. Level two rules can be found in the newest version of the *Compendium* and the CityTech, Second Edition boxed set. The technology covered under level two includes all of the weapons and equipment in the 2750, 3025, 3026, 3050 and 3055 technical readouts. According to the compendium, level two rules are to be used in all MechForce-level competitions and other tournaments. The third level covers the rules in the *BattleTech Tactical Handbook* and the experimental equipment in the MechWarrior adventure *Unbound* and are illegal for tournament play. As a result of some copyright problems, the rules for LAMs (Land-Air 'Mechs) were moved from the normal rules and into the *Tactical Handbook*. Normally, moving rules from the "core" to the "optional" category wouldn't bother me, but the ranking of rules by level smacks of elitism. It's bad enough that there are flamewars on the rec.games.mecha between players who favor 3025-era tech and players who favor 3050-era tech, but do they have to escalate the same thing among players in real life? I'd normally expect this sort of thing from T\$R, but FASA?? Well, it's happened in other games, so I guess I should have seen it coming to BattleTech.

The 'mech, infantry/battlearmor and vehicle sheets are relatively unchanged--they still have all those nasty little circles to fill in. The 'mech sheets now sport an auto-eject box for the ejection rules and FASA has redone the quad 'mech sheet. The naval vehicle sheet now takes up a full page, but at a price--FASA did not print a sheet for buildings in this edition. The artwork, some new and some recycled from past books, is very good and is effective in adding to the book's atmosphere.

At this time, I would recommend this edition of the rules to any BattleTech player who wants to stay up-to-date on the rules. However, this may change in time as I run through the rules, so take this review with a grain of salt until I get a better one written.

MORE MISCELLANEOUS MUSINGS

NOTE: This is strictly an opinion piece. The statements made in this article do not represent the opinions of the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America), the CAR-PGa (Committee for the Advancement of Role-Playing Games), or the gaming community at large (both on and off the Internet), they are simply my own thoughts on the subject. Readers and contributors to *Interregnum* who wish to discuss this topic (or any other editorial topic) with me, are free to do so through snail- or e-mail as long as they do so in a civil manner. "Flames" and other uncivilized mail will be directed to File 13 (a.k.a. the wastebasket).

The Idea Factory, or, A Personal Promise

While I was collecting the Star Wars Galaxy cards and waiting patiently (well, okay, *impatiently*) for my issues of *Dark Lords* to arrive, I had a rather interesting thought pass through my brain--why not use the comics and cards as material for a Star Wars campaign? I don't know why I

never thought of this before, and I'm sure other GMs have done it, but this really took me by surprise. *Tales of the Jedi* has tons of material I could use for adventures (in fact, Pete's scenario "The Ice Ruins" started me thinking about writing an adventure centered around a lost Jedi outpost and a holocron) and Jedi relics. The artwork on the collector cards also provides a variety of NPCs and locations. For example, in the description for card #147, Vader's companion isn't really identified (I just took a stab at it), which opens up some interesting questions--who is Vader's companion? An Imperial officer? A Jedi hunter? What business does Vader's companion have in going to see the Emperor?

This idea crossed my mind and has been firmly lodged there for only one reason--I have made a solemn promise to myself to stop buying commercial RPG products for a while. Why? First of all, there's the question of quality. A good example of this is the second edition of *Star Wars: The RPG*. The first edition, regardless of its flaws, was very good, but the second stank to high heaven--it turned a fairly open-ended, adventure filled, creative system into a clunky, overcomplicated, watered-down monstrosity. It [WEG] also went overboard on the "New Republic" material, almost completely neglecting players and GMs who have campaigns set during the timeframe of the movies. To add insult to injury, instead of creating new supplements as it had originally proposed, WEG started printing second edition rehashes of first edition sourcebooks (e.g. *The Rebel Alliance Sourcebook*, etc.)--material which could easily be converted by using the conversion rules in the back of the rulebook.

Second, there's the question of cost. As much as I'd love to get into a game like *Shadowrun* or *Earthdawn*, I just don't have the money to do it (even though the Guild of Adventure Gaming's 35% discount helps ;-)--supporting multiple hobbies, each one with its own random price hike, is rather difficult (see #@&% Marvel!). Third, there's the question of time. What good does it do to buy a game if you don't have time to learn the rules and play it? I'd love to sit down with at least one or two of my RPGs for a day and run through the rules to get a decent understanding of each one, but as usual, real life cuts in. I've already given up on buying material for *Star Wars*, *Paranoia*, *Pendragon*, *Toon*, *Hunter Planet*, and *Gamma World* for the above reasons plus others (e.g. lack of support, out of print, etc), and I plan on buying *GURPS Religion* and maybe *GURPS Bunnies and Burrows* before beginning my self-imposed withdrawal (detoxification?) from buying RPG and wargaming material (with the exception of magazines, of course ;-).

#@&% Marvel!

As if my financial problems with RPGs aren't enough, now Marvel Comics has reared its ugly, greed-filled head in my wallet's direction. The scuttlebutt around the local comic book shop is that Marvel has decided to move from their standard paper to a high quality, glossy paper, which means another wonderful price hike from \$1.50 an issue to something around \$1.95-2.75, regardless of the book's title. Naturally, Murphy's Law of Comic Books dictates that a price hike must occur when I find an X-title I'm happy with and interested in. I can understand and appreciate why books such as *Judge Dredd*, *Star Trek*, and *Tales of the Jedi* run the \$1.50 to \$1.95 gamut--the royalties to each universe's creator undoubtedly take a good chunk of DC and Dark Horse Comics's profits from those books--but Marvel's move is just plain stupid (of course, so is some of the artwork and writing in some of their other comic books, but that's a different story altogether). However, a price hike is minor when you consider what Marvel had planned to do in January. In October, Marvel announced that it was going to kill off Professor Xavier and permanently alter the Marvel mutant universe. Groups such as X-Factor, the X-Men, and X-Force would be replaced by their counterparts from an alternate universe. For example, in Marvel's new vision of the mutant world, Jean Grey hooks up with Logan (Wolverine) instead of Scott Summers (Cyclops) while Magneto forms Factor-X (the team replacing X-Factor). This got a lot of fans riled up and so Marvel has decided to leave the X-titles alone and publish the alternate timeline as a limited series spanning each of the different X-titles. This, of course, is another effect of Murphy's Law of Comic Books and grates on my nerves like fingernails across a chalkboard. I really don't like the thought of giving up on a new X-title so soon, but I can't stand Marvel's annual crossovers, thus leading to another tough sacrifice.

Sigh Maybe it's time I took up something simple, like owl stretching. . .

COMMENTARY

The Log That Flies: (Interregnum #6) Since when were Rob Repp's posts copyrighted? How can one copyright a message posted in a public forum? Methinks I smell a large rat and its initials are T\$R. I can understand how some material (e.g. homebrew supplements, 'zines and character profiles) would be considered to be published works when posted to the Internet, but material in general? Sheesh. Seeing that T\$R is following in Palladium's footsteps, I don't think there will be too many gamers crying at T\$R's "funeral" when and if it alienates enough of its publics to go under. (Interregnum #7) The Tri-Tac incident appears to be another demonstration of the government's ignorance concerning RPGs. At least it wasn't as nasty as SJC's run-in with the Secret Service. "The Ice Ruins" got me thinking about an adventure idea for Star Wars. About the censoring of Bugs and crew—I was told by a friend who is a Warner Brothers fan that WB stopped allowing networks to censor their 'toons due to complaints from fans. I have no idea whether or not this is true. (Interregnum #8) Re-reading Tolkien. Hmmmm... That sounds like a good idea. I'm 'kinda re-reading "Redwall" by Brian Jacques. I say "'kinda" because I'm also about halfway through "Tailchaser's Song" by Tad Williams. (Interregnum #9) I'm all for an issue every five weeks. I had thought about suggesting quarterly issues, but that creates the risk of huge issues and higher printing costs. Which edition of Star Wars are you referring to in your comments? If you're referring to the first edition, I know of quite a few gamers who strongly disagree with you. Stats for the heroes appear in *The Star Wars Sourcebook* and *The Star Wars Movie Trilogy Sourcebook*.

Session Notes: (Interregnum #6) Interesting review of Castle Falkenstein. After reading it, I almost regretted putting RPGs on financial hiatus. (Interregnum #7) I've never played Toon on a regular basis—it's more a monotony breaker than a campaign game. Although I suppose you could set up some interesting adventures involving the 'Toon Actors Union (hmmm... "'Toons on Strike"...) and other fun stuff. (Interregnum #8) RAEBNC. (Interregnum #9) The second edition of Star Wars is a rather nasty bit of work. The only pros are the improved armor rules (the increased the Strength bonus against physical and melee attacks and slughthrowers and added hit locations) and skill specializations. The cons are too numerous to mention. The biggest problems are 1) Bill Smith wrote the second edition, not Greg Costikyan; 2) The game takes Star Wars into the "New Republic" era, something which WEG completely overdid; and 3) The second edition lacks the GM tips of the first edition (WEG cut them out and created the *GM's Handbook*).

Refugee: (Interregnum #6-9) Commander outranking Captain? After seeing your comment, I rechecked my source (*The Imperial Sourcebook*) and yes, it is weird. I guess that's just another one of those little unexplained quirks about the Empire. Your writing is very well done and is very detailed. Keep it up.

Strange Sands: (Interregnum #6) I enjoyed your writing on dark roleplaying. It showed a great deal of insight. About submitting to West End Games—now that I've printed four issue of *T.F.T.E.U.*, I think I might. I'd really, *really* like to work on WEG's Jedi Knights Sourcebook and break its view of the Jedi as mages, but rumor has it that a third edition of Star Wars is due out either this year or the next and I believe two editions are enough for me to worry about. All I can say about "Clouds, Like Sentinels" is, "Wow!" Have you ever thought of expanding it into a book? (Interregnum #7) Horror in a medieval RPG—has anyone thought of or tried doing this with Pendragon? About *Dark Empire*—I like the writing and artwork and the RPG sourcebook was great, but it could have used some original artwork by Cam Kennedy rather than taking all of the artwork from the comic books. *Dark Empire II* is another story. The only gripes I have about Zahn's books are that he had too large a cast of characters and he relied too much on the RPG for source material. (Interregnum #9) Interesting piece on your Harn campaign.

Aye Matey: (Interregnum #7) "Another poor lad about to be harpooned"—bwah-hahahahahahahaha! I love it! (Interregnum #9) Loved the cartoon and your rating system was great. "Not even a plank, matey," indeed! :-)

Who is John Galt?: (Interregnum #6-7) RAEBNC. (Interregnum #8) Even though I've never played RuneQuest, I ran through your solo adventure. It's very well done and it makes me long for the days when fantasy gaming was dominated by high-fantasy and solo games were bountiful. Ah well, at least

I've still got my copy of Ian Livingston's "Dicing With Dragons" to fall back on now and then. (Interregnum #9) RAEBNC.

The Eight-Track Mind: (Interregnum #6) "Things You'll (Probably) Never See Sold!" was great. How about GURPS Iowa? :-) As for some people "overdoing" M:TG, I think "overdoing" the game is an understatement. I recently read another announcement from a game shop owner whose shop was broken into-the perpetrators stole most of the M:tg "The Dark" cards in stock. (Interregnum #7) Your article on vampires was great. You wouldn't mind printing a bibliography up for it, would you?? I'm interested in seeing what your sources for the article were. (Interregnum #8) Your reviews of RPG comics were good. Though I have to admit that "Joe Genero" just doesn't appeal to me as much as "Murphy's Rules." (Interregnum #9) RAEBNC.

Firestarter: (Interregnum #6) RAEBNC.

Reading Companion: (Interregnum #6) RAEBNC. (Interregnum #8) Your "Twelve Worlds" campaign sounds interesting and I'd like to hear more about it.

The Skeleton Key: (Interregnum #6) Your Avalon game sounds rather interesting. Is it based on GURPS Bunnies & Burrows, Palladium's TMNT system or is it homebrew? I'm interested in the background of the game and the rules you use. (Interregnum #8) I think "The Puppet Masters" was all right, but the fact that it was set mainly in Iowa made it feel a bit "hokey." At the same time, as an Iowan, I can honestly say that it did have me spooked at times. I agree that they should have concentrated more on the psychological aspects of being taken over by an alien intelligence.

Softly, Softly: (Interregnum #9) Interesting background. Hope to see more material from you in Interregnum.

COLOPHON

This issue of *Tales From The Electric Underground* was created on a Macintosh Centris 610 using Microsoft Word 5.0 and a Laserwriter IIG printer. No proofreader credits this time. Any mistakes I made are my own fault.

The Pen and Sword

Volume Two: Number One

Mark Sabalauskas (marks@slough.mit.edu)

Hello, Again

Hi everyone, I'm back. After a hard drive crash, the completion of an academic quest, a move, and an unsuccessful bid for public office, I finally have time again to scratch out a few words for Interregnum.

Burnout

I've never really seen burnout as a problem in gaming. When a campaign starts getting stale to run, I stop running it, and start again in a different setting or with a different system. I've drawn flak from players, but if I'm getting bored with the campaign, or have run out of useful plot ideas, I don't see how I can hold the players' interest for much longer.

Internet Resources

Players of the collectable card game On the Edge will be happy to know that there is a new mailing list dedicated to the game. To subscribe send a SUB message to On-the-Edge-request@gojira.monsta.com. There is a separate mailing list for trading or selling OtE cards. The subscription address is swaps@gojira.monsta.com.

Rules, card lists, and other material on all sorts of card games can be FTP'ed from the archives at marvin.macc.wisc.edu. The archives are divided in to "Magic" and "other card games" subdirectories.

Star Trek: Generations

Paramount's film Star Trek: Generations has fallen like a giant saucer on the film-going public. Depicting the anticlimactic meeting between two generations of Trek history this movie seems content to coast on the fond memories of fans

Generations begins with a long, largely unnecessary introduction set aboard the newly launched starship Enterprise-B. Although undoubtedly

a latinum mine of information for Trek trivia buffs, this sequence goes nowhere, but gets in a few easy laughs along the way. These twenty minutes would have been better used telling us something about Soron, the story's villain, or about the Nexus, the energy ribbon with which he is obsessed. Instead we get cameo appearances by James Doohan and Walter Koenig.

The middle, good, third of the movie begins seventy-five years after Kirk is lost in the energy ribbon. A witty scene set aboard yet another Enterprise, a wooden ship recreated on the Enterprise-D's Holodeck, would have made an excellent introduction to Generations. It's still good twenty minutes in. The movie seems to start again, to move, to feel the thrill of life along its keel. With some fresh wind in its sails, the movie embarks on a serviceable plot in which the crew of the Enterprise face three problems.

Picard receives news that his brother's family has burned to death in their home on Earth. Data decides to use the emotion chip stolen from him by his evil twin, Lore. And the Enterprise becomes enmeshed in the machinations of Soron and the Duras sisters, Lursa and B'Etor, who wish to gain control of the Klingon Empire.

The meeting between Picard and Soron provides the movie's high point. With Picard still reeling from his family's tragedy, Soron persuades Picard to let him continue his delayed experiment by telling him that "Time is the fire in which we burn." McDowell delivers this line beautifully. But the movie fails to maintain the tragic intensity of this scene.

Meanwhile Data's acquisition of emotions is played for cheap laughs. Spiner's uneven performance as the emotional Data contrast unfavorably with his mastery of emotionless acting. Several extreme close-ups also reveal that Soong type androids look exactly like aging actors in gold face paint.

The Pen and Sword

Volume Two: Number One

Mark Sabalauskas (marks@slough.mit.edu)

Picard and Data eventually unravel Soron's rather stupid plot to return himself to the Nexus. To enter the Nexus, he seems to think he has to stand on a silly looking metal platform on a desert planet to which the Nexus has been diverted by the simple expedient of blowing up a few suns. Soron seemingly forgot that he entered the Nexus the first time while on a space ship. Why he doesn't just fly one into it now is unexplained. Soron does say that he has 'explored every alternative', but Kirk fell into the damn thing without benefit of even a space suit.

Soron's objective discovered, the Enterprise rushes to thwart his plan which will incidentally kill millions. In battle with the Duras ship, the Enterprise is destroyed by a rather unconvincing stratagem. The resulting saucer crash is a special effects tour de force. Meanwhile, on the planet, Picard is swept into the Nexus, where his inmost dreams will be realized.

These dreams apparently revolve around a very Victorian Christmas, a litter of children and a red-headed cockney wife. Spicy stuff. One is amazed at the strength of will it must take for Picard to tear himself away from this, his deepest fantasy.

But tear away he does, on the advice of Guinan's ghost. For no particular reason he decides he needs help. Fortunately help is available in the person of James T. Kirk, also in the Nexus. Kirk eventually agrees to return to reality and the two jump back in time just far enough to ensure that they will have a really hard time stopping Soron. Several pointless fight scenes ensue, and the plot is resolved in a manner that would be an embarrassment in a cheap action film. Kirk must crawl along a metal bridge hanging from a single rusty bolt so that Picard can blow up the villain. This is a Star Trek ending? Picard's burial of Kirk is moving, but is not sufficient excuse for this mishmash of a story. If Paramount felt it was essential for Kirk to pass a torch to Picard, they could have given him a good story to do it in.

Hopefully, when the time comes for another NextGen movie, Paramount will invest in a story worthy of the faith the show's fans have given it.

Interregnum #9

The Log That Flies: Good luck with Wonder, it sounds like a fun challenge.

Session Notes: The "Resurrection Hut" mentality does seem to be the prevalent paradigm in gaming. I recall that there was a Runequest scenario in "River of Cradles" in which the players presented with a resurrection matrix and told that it is to be used "only in emergencies."

Refugee: RAEBNC

Eight Track Mind: The fiction really enhanced the points you were making.

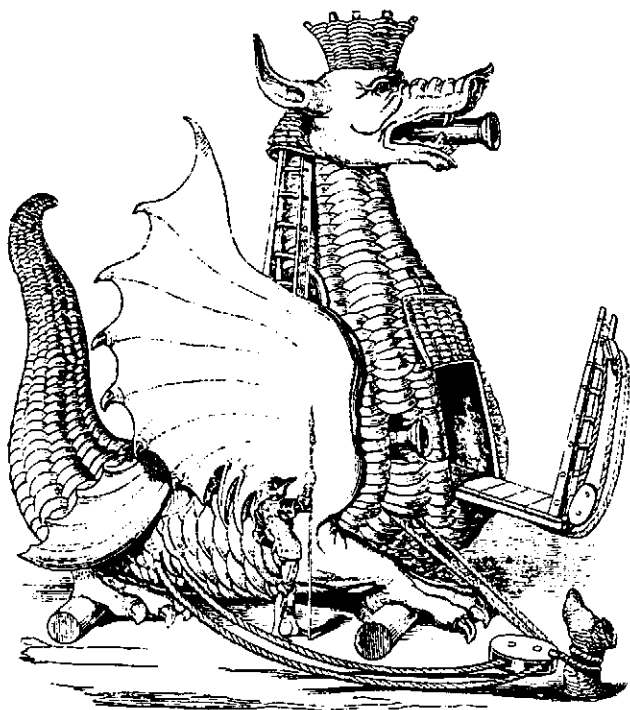
I admit the Pendragon campaign has been deadlier than any other I've run, on the other hand, your character has done more than survived; he's prospered.

Aye, Matey: I think that Complete Strategist deserves an above average rating on Card Games, even if it's not in the same league as Your Move Games. Otherwise, I wholeheartedly agree with your assessments.

Peaceable Demeanor: So, have you been able to resolve any of the problems you had encountered playing strong characters in a state of change? Do you find it easier to play a strongly conflicted character in a PBEM games where you are not taking time away from the other characters?

Softly, Softly: Welcome to Interregnum!

Strange Sands: I've always admired your ability to paint vivid descriptions of the game world. It's something I've felt that I should work harder at as a gamemaster.



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Subscriptions: There is no fixed subscription period. Subscribers should mail a check or money order in US funds payable to Peter Maranci to establish an account; as issues are mailed the cost of the issue and the postage used to mail it will be deducted from the account. When the account gets low the amount left will be noted on the mailing envelope. At that point the subscriber may send more money to continue receiving issues, put their account on hold until some future time, or have the balance returned (at the editor's option, a final issue may be mailed instead to close out accounts in which the balance is less than the cost of one issue).

The usual cost per issue is \$2 plus postage. Due to special circumstances the cost has been lowered to \$1 per issue plus postage. Please note that when and/or if the special deal lapses we will return to the original rate.

Postage: Within the US 1st class mail for the average issue of **IR** costs \$1.67, while book rate (4th class) costs \$1.05. Subscribers may choose which method of mailing they prefer. Overseas subscribers may choose any type of mail available from the US Postal Service; rates under \$2 exist. Warning: all rates may go up soon!

Sample Issues: Sample issues may be obtained by mailing a check or money order for \$3 if the issue is to be mailed within the United States. A sample issue mailed outside the US is \$4 in US funds.

Writing for Interregnum: Anyone is welcome to write for **IR**. Since **Interregnum** is an amateur publication, not for profit, contributors help defray the cost of photocopying their zines. The cost is normally \$2 per single-sided page. However, the special circumstances noted above have made it possible to reduce the cost to \$1 per page. Contributors are not charged for a copy of the issue they write in—their only additional cost is postage.

Alternatively contributors may mail in 200+ copies of their zine, printed double-sided to reduce mailing costs. Zines mailed via UPS or any other private delivery service should be sent "no signature required".

Format: Zines must be clean and sharp enough to photocopy well. Desktop publishing is not required; zines may be typed, or even handwritten. Margins should be at least 1/2 inch wide on the top, bottom, and outer edges; a one-inch margin should be used for the binding edge (the left side for odd-numbered pages, right side for even-numbered pages). Internal art enhances readability and is always appreciated, as are multiple columns and subheads.

Content: Contributors are free to write as they wish, almost totally free of editorial oversight. I ask only that nothing be included which could lead to legal difficulties; please keep in mind that **Interregnum** is shipped across state lines and overseas, and is distributed in game stores which are open to all ages.

Copyright: All zines should be copyrighted by the author. Copyright may be asserted through the following phrase: Copyright (Your Name) (Date) or © (Your Name) (Date). (c) is not a valid designation.

Copyrighted and trademarked material is often discussed in **Interregnum**. Discussion of such material is not intended as a challenge to any copyright or trademark.

Emailing Zines: Zines in ASCII form may be emailed to the editor via the InterNet for DTP formatting, or sent in on 3.5" or 5.25" DOS-compatible floppy disks. Since time is limited (and becomes tighter as collation looms), ASCII zines sent in for layout should arrive at least four days before the deadline for printed zines. I'll attempt to capture the style of the contributor, if I have a sample of previous work and enough time. I can also accept files created with Publish-It for DOS or Windows on 3.5 or 5.25" disks.

Emailed zines will be printed on a 300 dpi Okidata OL400e laser printer for no extra charge.

Special ASCII codes may be included in emailed text to allow my DTP program to automatically format elements of the zine. A guide to these codes is available for email contributors—email for info.

Letters to the Editor will be gladly received, and printed in the editorial section. No letter will be published, however, that is marked "not for publication".

Back Issues: Back issues are available while supplies last. Issues #1-3 cost \$2 each in US funds, plus the cost of postage. Subsequent issues are available at \$1 + postage. A considerable savings in postage costs may be realized by shipping several issues at once.

Distribution: A limited number of promotional copies of **Interregnum** are distributed at selected game stores, conventions, and other sites. If you're interested in distributing free copies of **IR**, please contact the editor.

Please note that as the number of distributors increases (and it has been doing so, steadily) the number of promotional copies available for each site will necessarily decrease. Furthermore, production of promotional copies may be reduced or eliminated without warning. Only paying subscribers can be sure to receive all issues of **IR**. Paying subscribers receive their issues weeks or even months in advance of promotional distribution. Finally, only paying subscribers will receive special mailings of bonus material. In other words, the Editor strongly urges readers of the promotional copies to subscribe. ☺

Net Connection: An InterNet alias has been set up which allows correspondents to receive information and updates about the status of **Interregnum**. Anyone who would like to be on that list should send email to maranci@max.tiac.net and include a valid InterNet address.

For even more information, write to: Peter Maranci, 81 Washington St. #2, Malden MA 02148

